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THE COMIC YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS IS PART OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL, FACSIMILE REPRINTING OF THE **FAMOUS (AND INFAMOUS!) EC COMICS** LINE OF THE EARLY 1950s! WE STARTED WITH THE **FIRST ISSUE** OF EACH TITLE AND ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE **BITTER END!** GET ON THE BANDWAGON, AND **FILL IN THE GAPS** IN YOUR COLLECTION FROM THIS BACKLIST!



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CRYPT #2



CRYPT #3



CRYPT #4



CRYPT #5



CRYPT #6



W SCI #1



W SCI #2



W SCI #3



W SCI #4



W SCI #5



W SCI #6



SHOCK #1



SHOCK #2



SHOCK #3



SHOCK #4



SHOCK #5



SHOCK #6

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The SACRIFICE

I HAVE JUST WRITTEN, SIGNED AND MAILED TO THE POLICE A CAREFULLY WORDED STATEMENT, CONFESSING TO THE MURDER OF JONATHAN FIELDING... COMPLETELY ABSOLVING HIS WIDOW, GLORIA FIELDING, OF ANY COMPLICITY IN THE HORRENDOUS DEED AND CLEARING HER NAME OF ALL GUILT. I HAVE DONE THIS OUT OF THE DEEP LOVE AND COMPASSION I HAVE FOR THIS WOMAN. I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE HER SUFFER ANOTHER NIGHT OF DEGRADATION AND HUMILITY SUCH AS SHE IS NOW ENDURING AT THIS VERY MOMENT. IN AN HOUR OR SO, GLORIA WILL BE COMING IN THE DOOR... RED-EYED AND SOBBING. AND IT WILL BE THE LAST TIME FOR HER. NOW, I STAND BEFORE THE HUGE FRENCH DOORS LEADING OUT ONTO HER PENTHOUSE BALCONY. IN THE EAST, THE NIGHT SKY IS JUST BEGINNING TO RETREAT FROM THE ADVANCING DAWN. I LIFT THE VIAL OF POISON TO MY LIPS, AND I DRINK IT DOWN...



FOR YOU... MY DARLING...

**A CRIME
SUSPENSE STORY**

THERE IS A *BURNING* WITHIN ME... A *LIQUID FIRE* CARRYING WITH IT *THE TOUCH OF DEATH*. IN A FEW MINUTES I WILL *FEEL* THAT TOUCH, AND I WILL *DIE* AND GLORIA WILL *FINALLY BE FREE*. I TURN AND WALK SLOWLY TO A CHAIR, SINKING DOWN INTO ITS LUXURIOUS SOFTNESS. THE MUSIC FROM THE PHONOGRAPH DRIFTS ACROSS THE PENTHOUSE LIVING-ROOM. MUSIC... SWEET MUSIC. LIKE THE GLORIOUS MUSIC I HEARD IN MY HEART THE DAY I FIRST MET HER... *GLORIA... THE WOMAN I LOVE...*

JONATHAN: COME IN, GLORIA. A PLEASURE, MRS. FIELDING.
I... OH, I'M SORRY! I WANT YOU TO MEET JAMES REED, MR. REED... MY WIFE, GLORIA...
I DON'T KNOW YOU HAD COMPANY.



GLORIA FIELDING WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN I HAD EVER SEEN. I THINK I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER THE MOMENT I MET HER. AND SHE *KNEW* IT. SOMETHING DOWN DEEP INSIDE HER SEEMED TO STIR, TOO...

MR. REED IS AN INSURANCE SALESMAN, MY DEAR. HE'S TRYING TO INTEREST ME IN A POLICY...
MR. REED LOOKS VERY CAPABLE OF INTERESTING PEOPLE IN... IN INSURANCE POLICIES, JONATHAN.
YOU FLATTER ME, MRS. FIELDING.



THE ATTRACTION BETWEEN GLORIA AND ME WAS LIKE A SNOWBALL ROLLING DOWNHILL, GATHERING MOMENTUM AND SIZE AS ITS SPEED INCREASED...

WELL, THANK YOU, MR. REED, LEAVE ME YOUR CARD AND I'LL CALL YOU...

YES, MR. REED, HERE YOU ARE...

OF COURSE...



I'LL NEVER FORGET THE LOOK THAT GLORIA GAVE ME AS SHE SAW ME TO THE DOOR OF HER SPACIOUS SHOW-PLACE HOME. IT WAS A LOOK OF HUNGER AND LONELINESS AND DESPERATION AND A THOUSAND YET-UNSAID WORDS...

WELL... GOOD-NIGHT, MRS. FIELDING. I... I TRUST I'LL BE HEARING FROM YOU...

I'M SURE OF IT, MR. REED. I THINK YOUR... ER... POLICY... IS JUST WHAT IS... NEEDED!



THAT'S ALL THERE WAS TO IT. A GLANCE... A SMILE... A FEW INNOCENT PHRASES... AND SUDDENLY THE INFERNO IN OUR HEARTS WERE ROARING WITH THE FLAMES OF DESIRE. I WASN'T SURPRISED AT ALL WHEN SHE CALLED THE NEXT DAY...

MRS. FIELDING! I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU CAN YOU GET AWAY FOR AN HOUR? IT'S IMPORTANT! MY... MY HUSBAND WON'T BE HERE...



I SHALL NEVER FORGET THAT FIRST SECRET MEETING... THE UNCOMFORTABLE FORCED CONVERSATION SCALING THE WALL OF MUTUAL EMBARRASSMENT THAT STOOD BETWEEN US... THE SILENCE WHILE OUR HUNGRY THOUGHTS WHIRLED WITHIN US, TRYING TO SEEK EXPRESSION... AND THEN THE SUDDEN SURGE OF PASSION... THE BREAK-THROUGH...

DARLING... DARLING... FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT I SAW YOU...

DON'T SPEAK, JUST HOLD ME... KISS ME...



OURS WAS A LOVE THAT HAD SPRUNG SUDDENLY... AN EXPLOSION OF EMOTION... A PASSIONATE SWEEPING OF BODY AND MORALS. WE MET, WE LOVED... IT WAS SIMPLE IN ITS VIOLENCE, AND IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE...

HE'D NEVER GIVE ME UP. HE'D HOLD ON TO ME... FOREVER. BUT... YOU COULD... HAVE ME AND HIS FORTUNE...

GLORIA. I... I... HUH? YOU... YOU MEAN...



IT WAS A BLINDING LOVE. IT HAD NO ROOM FOR SOBER THINKING, IT WAS A CRASHING SYMPHONY AND I PLAYED BLINDLY ALONG...

IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE, DARLING. THE BALCONY OUT THERE. ONE PUSH... AND...

BUT THAT'S MURDER, DEAREST. I... I...



YES, I PLAYED ALONG, THE TUNE WAS DESIRE. THE THEME WAS PASSION. THE INSTRUMENT... WAS DEATH...

MY WIFE FINALLY CONVINCED ME TO TAKE OUT THAT POLICY, MR. REED. NOW, ABOUT THE PREMIUMS...

GENTLEMEN. DON'T YOU THINK IT WOULD BE MUCH COOLER ON THE BALCONY...?



THE PIECE HAD BEEN WELL-REHEARSED. WE KNEW EVERY NOTE, EVERY BAR, EVERY MEASURE. THE STAGE WAS SET. THIS MAD MUSIC WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN...

YES. WELL, AS I WAS SAYING, REED, I'D PREFER THE PREMIUMS TO BE LUMPED INTO ONE YEARLY SUM... SO...

JONATHAN! COME QUICKLY! LOOK...



MY HEART WAS A THUMPING KETTLE-DRUM. GLORIA'S VOICE WAS A CLASHING CYMBAL. JONATHAN HURRIED TO THE EDGE OF THE PARAPET AND GAZED DOWN INTO THE CITY CANYON BELOW... DOWN TO WHERE GLORIA POINTED...

WHAT IS IT, DEAR? WHAT DO YOU SEE?

NOW, DARLING! NOW...



THE MELODY, JONATHAN'S SHRIEK, FADED AWAY... FADED DOWN INTO THE CANYON... DOWN EIGHTEEN FLOORS TO A DEATH-FINALE...

THE CONCERT WAS OVER. JONATHAN LIVED NO MORE. GLORIA WAS FREE... AND SHE WAS MINE. SHE FELL INTO MY ARMS...

OH, JAMES! HIS SCREAM! IT... IT WAS AWFUL! AWFUL!

IT'S ALL OVER, NOW, GLORIA. G'MON! LET'S GO DOWN...



THE AMBULANCE-SIREN WAS AN ENCORE THAT SUNG INTO THE CANYON. THE INTERNE LOOKED AT JONATHAN'S BROKEN AND TWISTED BODY AND SHOOK HIS HEAD...

YOU DON'T NEED ME! YOU NEED A MORGUE-WAGON!

SOB... SOB...



THE POLICE CAME AND QUESTIONED US...

I... I'M JUST AN INSURANCE SALESMAN. I CAME UP HERE TO SELL MR. FIELDS A POLICY. WE WERE OUT ON THE BALCONY. HE... HE SLIPPED...

SOB. SOB... IT... IT WAS AN ACCIDENT! A HORRIBLE, HORRIBLE ACCIDENT!



THE POLICE HAD NO REASON TO BELIEVE OTHERWISE. THERE WAS NO MOTIVE. GLORIA AND JONATHAN HAD BEEN HAPPILY MARRIED. I WAS A STRANGER. THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF FOUL PLAY. AND MY PARTING SHOT FIXED THINGS GOOD...

I'M SORRY MRS. FIELDS. YOUR HUSBAND DIDN'T SIGN THE PAPERS. HE... HE WASN'T EVEN COVERED...

GET OUT, REED! CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S UPSET ENOUGH ABOUT THIS?!



IT WAS OVER... DONE WITH. THE POLICE MADE THEIR REPORT... THE CORONER'S JURY DELIBERATED... AND THE REPORT WAS DELIVERED...

... ACCIDENTAL DEATH!
THIS CASE IS CLOSED.

AND THEN IT HAPPENED. WE WERE IN THE PENTHOUSE THAT NIGHT, CELEBRATING. THE PHONE RANG...

LET IT RING,
BABY

I'D BETTER ANSWER IT,
DEAR. IT MAY BE IMPORTANT.

I WATCHED GLORIA CROSS THE ROOM TO THE PHONE... BEAUTIFUL, DESIRABLE GLORIA... A WOMAN A MAN WOULD MURDER FOR. I WATCHED HER LIFT THE RECEIVER, WATCHED HER SOFT KISSABLE LIPS MOUTH THE WORDS, WATCHED HER FACE GROW PALE...

OH...NO? OH...
GOD, NO?

WHAT IS IT,
GLORIA?

SHE HUNG UP, SHAKING. SHE TURNED TO ME, FEAR WRITTEN IN WHITE ON HER LOVELY FACE...

IT...IT WAS A MAN, JIMMY!
HE...HE WANTS TO SEE US!
HE'S COMING UP. HE SAID...
HE SAID IT'S ABOUT MY
HUSBAND'S MURDER!

MURDER?!
GOOD LORD!

OUR PASSION-CONCERTO HAD HAD AN AUDIENCE. HE ARRIVED A FEW MINUTES LATER...TALL, DARK, SUAVE-LOOKING. HE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE LIVING-ROOM, GRINNING...

ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF. MY NAME IS PAUL NICHOLS. I LIVE OUT THERE...ON THE TWENTIETH FLOOR OF THE BUILDING OPPOSITE THIS ONE!

HIS MOUTH WAS A GRIM LINE...HARD AND CRUEL. HIS EYES WERE GLUED ON GLORIA AS HE SPOKE, TRAVELING OVER HER, ABSORBING...

I HAVE OFTEN WATCHED MRS. FIELDING FROM MY WINDOW... WATCHED HER WITH A GREAT DEAL OF ADMIRATION. I HAPPENED TO BE LOOKING THE NIGHT MR. FIELDING...ER...SHALL WE SAY...DIED?!

HE WENT ON...

I SAW IT ALL... EVERYTHING!
I SAW YOU LURE HIM TO THE EDGE... I SAW YOU PUSH HIM. I KNOW IT'S MURDER! I SAW IT ALL.

WHY...
YOU...



HE HELD UP HIS HAND...

DON'T TRY ANYTHING! IT WOULDN'T BE WISE! I HAVE WRITTEN DOWN WHAT I KNOW, AND MY SEALED STATEMENT IS NOW IN THE HANDS OF MY LAWYER, TO BE OPENED IN THE EVENT OF MY UNTIMELY DEATH...

THEN... THEN THIS IS BLACK MAIL!

CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL! IF MY ATTRACTION TO MRS. FIELDING HAD NOT BEEN SO... SO COMPELLING, I MIGHT NEVER HAVE SEEN, BUT I HAVE... AND I AM READY TO DO BUSINESS.

HOW... HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT?

HE LAUGHED. HIS EYES NEVER LEFT GLORIA...

I AM A RICH MAN, MR. REED. I DON'T WANT MONEY!

THEN... THEN WHAT DO YOU WANT?

I WANT MRS. FIELDING!

GASP... WHAT? NEVER!

HE GRINNED... EVILY... LECHEROUSLY...

LET'S GIVE THIS MATTER SOME SERIOUS THOUGHT MR. REED... MRS. FIELDING. LET'S NOT ACT HASTILY...

YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR MIND!

IF THE POLICE WERE TO FIND OUT WHAT I KNOW, BOTH YOU AND MRS. FIELDING WOULD DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR. YOU WOULDN'T WANT MRS. FIELDING TO DIE, WOULD YOU, MR. REED? YOU LOVE HER TOO MUCH FOR THAT. AND YOU, MRS. FIELDING, DO YOU WANT YOUR LOVER TO...

I'LL KILL YOU, NICHOLS, SO HELP ME!

WAIT, JIMMY! WAIT!

GLORIA LOOKED UP AT ME WITH TEAR-FILLED EYES...

I LOVE YOU, JIMMY! I DON'T WANT YOU TO DIE. I'D DO ANYTHING TO PREVENT IT. I LOVE YOU!

NOT THAT! I COULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO AGREE TO THAT!

PAUL NICHOLS SNEERED...

THEN I TELL
WHAT I KNOW!
IS THAT YOUR
DECISION?

NO. WAIT. LISTEN
TO ME, DARLING.
IT'LL ONLY BE FOR A
LITTLE WHILE. HE'LL
GROW TIRED OF ME. WE'LL
STILL HAVE OUR WHOLE
LIVES TOGETHER.

GLORIA...
SWEET... I...
SOB... I...
WON'T...
SOB...
LET YOU!



I COULDN'T HELP IT. I CRIED LIKE A BABY. GLORIA,
MY GLORIA. SHE WAS WILLING TO DEGRADE HERSELF
TO SAVE ME... GIVE HERSELF TO THIS FIEND...

ALL RIGHT, MR. NICHOLS.
WHAT ARE YOUR TERMS?

DURING THE DAY, I
AM AT THE OFFICE.
YOUR TIME IS
YOUR OWN. I AM
HOME AT EIGHT.
I EXPECT YOU TO
BE THERE... EVERY
NIGHT... WAITING...

NO!
OH,
GOD!
NO!



GLORIA HELD ME AS A MOTHER HOLDS A HURT SON...
PROTECTING... SOOTHING... RUNNING HER SOFT HANDS
OVER MY FACE, MY HAIR... HUSHING ME... LISTENING TO
HIS TERMS...

GO ON, MR.
NICHOLS.

THERE IS *NOTHING* TO GO ON ABOUT.
TOMORROW YOU WILL MARRY ME! AND NOW,
SINCE WE'RE ENGAGED, YOU MIGHT AS
WELL KNOW MY FIRST NAME. IT
IS PAUL.



I TOLD HIM... I TOLD HIM WHAT HIS NAME WAS.
EVERY VILE WORD I EVER KNEW, EVERY NAME
I'D EVER LEARNED, I CALLED HIM. HE SMILED AND
LEFT. GLORIA SIGNED...

LET ME KILL HIM, GLORIA!
LET ME...

THE STATEMENT,
DEAREST. REMEMBER
THE STATEMENT. HE
HAS US...



I REMEMBER THAT NEXTNIGHT. I
THOUGHT IT WOULD NEVER END.
THE WAITING. THE INTERMINABLE
WAITING. I PACED THE PENTHOUSE
FLOORS... SMOKED CIGARETTE
AFTER CIGARETTE... CURSED HIM...
AND CRIED FOR GLORIA...

AND TOWARDS DAWN, WITH SLEEP-
LESS EYES, I BEHELD MY LOVED
ONE AS SHE CAME IN...

GLORIA...
BABY...

OH, JIMMY... SOB...
JIMMY! I FEEL
SO... SO
FILTHY!

CHOKED...



SHE CRIED IN MY ARMS. SHE SHOOK
AS THOUGH SHE WERE COLD EVEN
THOUGH THE NIGHT WAS STIFLING.
AND I TRIED TO COMFORT HER...

DON'T GO BACK,
GLORIA. LET'S
RUN AWAY.
LET'S...

HE'LL TELL...
SOB... TELL...
THE POLICE.
THEY'LL FIND
US. NO! I
MUST GO ON
WITH THIS...



CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THE HORROR I'VE GONE THROUGH? CAN YOU UNDERSTAND THE PAIN... SEEING GLORIA RETURN EACH NIGHT... DEGRADED... HATING HERSELF... AND YET LOVING ME ENOUGH TO GO BACK AGAIN THE NEXT NIGHT.



HOW... HOW WAS IT TONIGHT, DARLING.

DON'T... JIMMY! DON'T ASK ME!

IT WAS AN ORGEE FOR HER, AN ORGEE THAT SAPPED HER BOTH PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY...



I'M ... SO TIRED, TODAY, JIMMY! PLEASE ...

I'M ... SORRY, HONEY.

AND IN THE MONTHS THAT FOLLOWED I WATCHED GLORIA GROW HARD AND NUMB AND COLD TO MY AFFECTIONS. AND EACH NIGHT, I WAITED FOR HER.



AND EACH MORNING SHE RETURNED, RED-EYED, BRICKEN, PLEADING...

I CAN'T GO ON, JIMMY! I CAN'T. HE'S KILLING EVERYTHING. EVERYTHING. EVEN MY NEED FOR YOU...

NO! OH, GLORIA... GLORIA...



THIS MORNING, WHEN SHE LOOKED AT ME AND CRIED...

OH, SAVE ME, DARLING. SAVE ME...



... I KNEW WHAT I HAD TO DO ...

SO I CONFESSED TO THE CRIME. I WROTE IT ALL DOWN. I HAD TO DO IT THIS WAY. I WAS AFRAID TO GO TO THE POLICE. I DON'T THINK I COULD KEEP GLORIA'S NAME OUT OF IT AT THE TRIAL. WRITING IT WAS EASIER...

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

I, JAMES REED, DO HEREBY CONFESS TO THE MURDER OF JONATHAN FIELDING. I DO THIS MURDER ALONE, UNAIDED, UNABETTED, AND WITH PREMEDITATION. NO ONE HAD ANY PART ...



I CLEARED GLORIA COMPLETELY. I GAVE THEM A GOOD REASON. I TOLD THEM HE'D INSULTED ME AND THAT WHEN MRS. FIELDING HAD GONE INTO THE LIVING-ROOM FOR CIGARETTES, I'D HURLED HIM OFF THE BALCONY...

... AND IN REMORSE FOR THIS, I HAVE RETURNED TO THE SCENE OF MY CRIME AND WILL COMMIT SUICIDE BY TAKING A DEADLY POISON. GOODBYE. JAMES A. REED.



AND NOW I AM LYING HERE, WATCHING THE DAWN COME UP IN THE EAST, AND KNOWING THAT AT LAST, GLORIA WILL BE FREE. THE POISON WITHIN ME BURNS AND MY MOUTH IS DRY AND THERE IS A DARKENING...

JIMMY... I'M... HOME!

G-GLORIA!



I CANNOT MOVE. MY BODY IS NUMB. I CALL HER NAME...

GLORIA...

JIMMY! JIMMY!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE!?



SHE RUSHES TO ME, SOBBING...

JIMMY...

I... TOOK... POISON... CONFESSED...
MURDER... YOU'RE... FREE...



IT'S FUNNY. A LITTLE WHILE AGO, THE APARTMENT WAS GETTING LIGHT. THE RISING SUN WAS STREAMING THROUGH THE WINDOWS. NOW, IT IS GETTING DARK ONCE MORE. I'M DYING. I KNOW IT. THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME...

POISON!? CONFESSION!?

SAVED... YOU! MAILED
CONFESSION TO POLICE.
HE... HAS... NO... HOLD...
ON... YOU... NOW...



IT'S STRANGE TO DIE. I SEEM TO HEAR LAUGHTER... GIRLISH LAUGHTER... GLORIA'S GIRLISH LAUGHTER...

WELL, IT'S ABOUT
TIME...

YOU...
CAN...
DIVORCE...
HIM...



AND NOW I SEEM TO HEAR HER VOICE... SNARLING AT ME... SNEERING...

IT'S ABOUT TIME,
SUCKER. I WAS
BEGINNING TO
THINK I'D SIZED
YOU UP WRONG!

HUH...
HUH...



ALL IS DARKNESS NOW. THE LAST THING I HEAR IS A PHONE DIAL'S CLICKING... AND GLORIA SAYS,

PAUL, DARLING! HE'S FINALLY DONE IT. HE'S TAKEN POISON AND MAILED A CONFESSION TO THE POLICE, ABSOLVING ME. YES, DEAR, I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK! I TOLD YOU I COULD FIND SOME SUCKER TO MURDER JONATHAN FOR US. YOU CAN PACK YOUR THINGS AND MOVE UPTOWN NOW... HERE... WITH ME!



THE
END

...so shall ye reap!

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN SAT IN THE LIVING-ROOM OF THEIR MODEST FRAME HOUSE AND LISTENED TO THE OMNIBUS TICKING OF THE MANTEL CLOCK AS ITS HANDS MOVED SLOWLY AROUND ITS FACE TOWARD ELEVEN. THEY SAT WITH BOWED HEADS AND BENT SHOULDERS AND CRIED-OUT EYES. THEY WERE IN THEIR FORTIES. THEY WERE WILMA AND MURRAY VORHEES... MOTHER AND FATHER. THEY WERE WAITING...

WHAT DID WE EVER DO, MURRAY?
WHAT DID WE EVER DO TO
DESERVE THIS? HOW
COULD HE DO THIS
TO US?

WE WERE GOOD
TO HIM, WILMA. ALL
OF OUR LIVES WE DID
RIGHT BY HIM. IT ISN'T
OUR FAULT. WE TRIED!



THE BOY SAT ALONE BENEATH THE GLARE OF THE OVERHEAD LAMP AND LISTENED TO THE OMNIBUS TICKING OF THE WALL CLOCK AS ITS HANDS MOVED SLOWLY AROUND ITS FACE TOWARD ELEVEN. HE SAT WITH BOWED HEAD AND BENT SHOULDERS AND CRIED-OUT EYES. HE WAS TWENTY. HE WAS KENNETH VORHEES... SON. HE WAS WAITING...

HOW DID IT HAPPEN? WHY DID I TURN OUT
LIKE THIS? WHAT MADE ME LIKE THIS?
WHO'S TO BLAME?



THE MOTHER SHOOK HER HEAD SADLY...

WHEN HE WAS A *BABY* HE WAS *PALE...THIN...SICKLY*. I *WORRIED* ABOUT HIM...*TODD* CARE OF HIM...MADE HIM *STRONG*. I USED TO FEED HIM *GOOD FOODS...WHOLE SOME FOODS*. HE'D TURN UP HIS *FUNNY LITTLE NOSE...SDB...BUT HE'D FINISH THEM!*



THE SON SHOOK HIS HEAD SADLY...

EVEN WHEN I WAS A *KID* THEY *MADE* ME DO THINGS I *DIDN'T WANT* TO DO. I REMEMBER MY MOTHER *FORCING FOODS THAT I DESPISED DOWN MY THROAT*. FOODS THAT *NAUSEATED* ME. I REMEMBER, AFTERWARD, *RUNNING OUT INTO THE BACK YARD...THE BATHROOM...AND THROWING UP!*



"YOU WERE A *GOOD* MOTHER TO HIM, WILMA. *DON'T EVER THINK DIFFERENT*. AND I WAS A *GOOD FATHER*. WHY *DIDN'T I PLAY* WITH HIM WHENEVER I *COULD?* WASN'T I JUST LIKE A *BIG BROTHER* TO HIM?"

LISTEN, KENNY! WHEN I GET *THROUSN* WITH YOU, YOU'LL BE THE *BEST FIRST SACKER IN TOWN*. *NOW WATCH*, AND TRY TO GET IT *RIGHT*. FIRST...

YES, DADDY!



"MOM THOUGHT SHE WAS DOING RIGHT. AND DAD...DAD WAS A FATHER AT HIS OWN CONVENIENCE. HE'D PLAY WITH ME *RARELY!* ONLY WHEN HE WANTED TO...*NOT WHEN I WANTED IT OR NEEDED IT!*"

PLEASE, DADDY! THERE'S A *GAME* TOMORROW. IF I *COULDN'T* MAKE OUT *GOOD* THEY'LL *KICK ME OFF THE TEAM!* COMON...

GO AWAY, KENNY! I'M *TIRED!* LEAVE ME *ALONE!* STOP *ANNOYING* ME!



"WEREN'T WE CAREFUL ABOUT WHAT MOVIES HE SAW, THE BOOKS HE READ? REMEMBER THE DAY WE FOUND HIM READING THAT *CHEAP LURID COMIC BOOK?* WEREN'T WE ALWAYS LOOKING OUT FOR HIS OWN *GOOD?*"

WHAT DO YOU MEAN IT'S A '*COMIC*' BOOK? '*COMIC*' HAN! IT'S NOTHING BUT *MURDER AND VIOLENCE*. I *FORBID* YOU TO *READ* THIS *TRASN*, UNDERSTAND? UNDERSTAND? THE NEXT TIME I CATCH YOU...

YES, MOMMY...



"THINGS THAT WERE WRONG FOR ME WERE PERFECTLY OKAY FOR MY FOLKS. I REMEMBER THE DAY THEY FOUND ME READING A HARMLESS COMIC. THEY LECTURED AND SHOUTED AND SCREAMED. BUT, THAT EVENING, AT DINNER..."

LISTEN TO *THIS*, WILMA. LAST NIGHT, TWO UNIDENTIFIED MEN BROKE INTO THE HOME OF MR. AND MRS. SO-AND-SO AND WHILE ONE OF THEM HELD THE HUSBAND PRISONER IN THE BATHROOM, THE OTHER...YOU KNOW...THE WIFE. THEN THEY KILLED HER AND FATALLY WOUNDED...

HERE! LET ME SEE THAT!





'DIDN'T WE TRY TO SHOW HIM THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **RIGHT** AND **WRONG**? REMEMBER THE DAY HE SWIPED THE NEIGHBOR'S KID'S **TOY**? HOW WE **LECTURED** HIM... TRIED TO **TEACH** HIM THAT HE MUSTN'T **TAKE** THINGS THAT DON'T **BELONG** TO HIM...'

BUT IT WAS IN THE **YARD**, DADDY. I JUST WANTED TO **PLAY** WITH IT A WHILE. I **DIDN'T** STEAL IT.

IT'S THE **SAME** AS **STEALING**. YOU **KNEW** IT WASN'T **YOURS**, AND YET YOU **KEPT** IT. THAT'S **DISHONEST**.



'THEY WERE ALWAYS SO **RIGHTEDUS**. THEY TRIED TO TEACH ME **HONESTY** BUT DID THEY SET A GOOD **EXAMPLE** FOR ME? I REMEMBER DISTINCTLY A FEW NIGHTS AFTER THE **TOY INCIDENT**, LISTENING TO MY FATHER **Bragging**...

SO THERE'S THIS **WALLET** LYING **RIGHT** **SMACK** IN THE **MIDDLE** OF THE **ROAD** WITH **TWO** NICE **CRISP** **TEN** **DOLLAR** **BILLS** IN IT. **HEHHEH**. **FINDERS...** **KEEPERS**, I ALWAYS SAY!

NOW WE CAN GET THAT **LITTLE** **RACIO** WE'VE WANTED.



'AND WHEN HE STARTED GOING OUT WITH **GIRLS**! HOW WE TRIED TO MAKE SURE THEY WERE THE **RIGHT** **KIND**. REMEMBER THE TIME HE CAME HOME SO **LATE**? THE **LIPSTICK** ON HIS **COLLAR**...

LOOK AT THE **TIME**, **MURRAY**! LOOK AT HIS **SHIRT**. HE'S BEEN OUT WITH SOME **ND** **GOOD** **TRAMP**!

WHAT WERE YOU **DOING**, SON? **SNOOCHING** IN THE **BUSHES**? **NECKIN'**? TRYIN' TO...

GUT IT **DUT**, **DAD**!



'SHE WAS THE ONLY GIRL I EVER LOVED. SHE WAS SO **SWEET**, SO **WARM**. WE WENT TO A **DANCE**. ON THE WAY BACK TO TOWN THE **BUS** BROKE DOWN. SHE FELL ASLEEP ON MY **SHOULDER**. THAT'S HOW THE **LIPSTICK** GOT THERE. BUT MY FOLKS HAD TO TURN IT INTO SOMETHING **UGLY**. SOMETHING **DIRTY** AND **DEGRADING**...



'AND THE TIME HE PICKED ON THE KID DOWN THE **BLOCK**. A **GOOD** **SIX** **INCHES** **SHORTER** THAN **KENNY**. A **YEAR** **YOUNGER** AT LEAST. I WASN'T GOING TO HAVE A **BULLY** FOR A **SON**. **NOT** **ME**...

THAT'S **RIGHT**! YOU'RE A **BULLY**! PICK ON SOMEBODY YOUR **OWN** **SIZE**...OR ARE YOU **AFRAID**?


YOU...YOU WOULDN'T **UNDERSTAND**, **DAD**!



'HE CALLED ME A **BULLY**. HE NEVER EVEN **ASKED** **WHY** I DID IT. I WAS A **BULLY** AND THAT'S **ALL** **THERE** WAS TO **IT**. AND IT WAS **WRONG** FOR **ME**, BUT **RIGHT** FOR **HIM**. TO BE A **BULLY**!

HEH, HEH. YEP. OLD MAN **WILKENS** CLOSED HIS **PLACE** FOR **GOOD** TODAY. **WILMA**, I PUT THE **SQUEEZE** ON HIM... **UNDERSOLD** HIM ALL THE WAY. HE COULDN'T **AFFORD** THE **LOSSES**. I **COULD**. **TOO** **BAD**! **SMALL** **MAN**! **POOR**...






'HE NEVER APPRECIATED ANYTHING I DID FOR HIM, WILMA. THE STRINGS I HAD TO PULL TO GET HIM LINED UP FOR COLLEGE! THE PLANS I MADE! THE WONDERFUL PROFESSION I'D PLANNED FOR HIM. HE NEVER APPRECIATED IT!'

SOM. SOMEGAY, I'M GOING TO BE PROUD OF YOU. I ALWAYS WANTED TO BE A DOCTOR... BUT MY PA COULDN'T AFFORD IT. WELL, YOU'RE GOING TO BE ONE...YES, SIR! I'LL SEE TO IT! YES, SIR! MY SON...

A DOCTOR!


OUT, OAO!



'THEY NEVER ASKED ME ANYTHING. THEY TOLD ME. KENNETH, YOU'LL DO THIS. KENNETH, YOU'LL SEE THAT. THEY WERE ALMOST ABNORMALLY PROTECTIVE. THEY NEVER LET ME MAKE MY OWN DECISIONS!'

BUT, I DON'T WANT TO BE A DOCTOR. I'M AFRAID OF...BLOOD... IT MAKES ME GICK.


THEN YOU'LL GET USED TO IT! YOU'RE GOING TO BE A DOCTOR BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO, AND WHAT I SAY GOES!



'HOW WE SKIMPED AND SAVED AND DID WITHOUT SO THAT WE COULD PUT HIM THROUGH COLLEGE WHEN THE TIME CAME. HE NEVER COULD UNDERSTAND IT. HE WAS ALWAYS BITTER...'

I'M SORRY, KENNY. NO MONEY. NOT ONE CENT. WE'RE SAVING...TO PUT YOU THROUGH COLLEGE!


BUT I'VE GOT TO HAVE A QUARTER, MA! THERE'S A BALL GAME SATURDAY. WE'RE PLAYING TWO-BITS A MAN. I'VE GOT TO HAVE IT...



'COLLEGE WAS SO FAR AWAY. THAT BALL GAME WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ANYTHING TO ME. THE REST OF THE FELLOWS HAD ALLOWANCES. ALL I HAD WAS PROMISES OF A FUTURE COLLEGE CAREER. SURE I DID WRONG WHEN I TOOK THE MONEY. BUT...IF THEY'D ONLY BEEN UNDERSTANDING...'


KENNY! WHAT ARE YOU GOING?

MA! I...I...I HAD TO HAVE IT, MA! THE TWO-BITS!



'THAT'S RIGHT! HE STOLE FROM YOUR POCKETBOOK! YOU CAUGHT HIM...AND I REMEMBER THE BEATING I GAVE HIM. HE DESERVED IT. WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THEN, WILMA... WE SHOULD HAVE KNOWN!'

YOU LITTLE THIEF! TAKE THAT... DIRTY SNEAK...AND THAT...



'I WAS SORRY! I REALLY WAS! BUT I WASN'T A THIEF. I WASN'T, WAS MA A THIEF? DID SHE CONSIDER HERSELF A THIEF WHEN SHE'D GET UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT TO GO THROUGH OAO'S POCKETS AND HELP HERSELF? I SAW HER...'





'AND THEN, WHEN HE JOINED THAT ROWDY GANG, THEY WERE BAD, ALL OF THEM. REMEMBER THE SCENE WE HAD...HOW WE FORBID HIM FROM GOING OUT AT NIGHT WITH THEM? HOW HE WENT ANYWAY...'

LOOK, MA...PA. GET USED TO IT. I'M A BIG BOY. I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF...AND I'LL DO AS I PLEASE.

KENNETH!
COME
BACK.
KENNETH!



'THEY WERE A BAD LOT...THAT GANG. REMEMBER THE NIGHT THEY BEAT UP THAT BOY? KENNY JOINED THEM...HELPED THEM. HE WAS NEVER BROUGHT UP TO HATE MINORITIES. YET HE HELPED THEM. WHY?

YOU BUM! YOU...YOU...WHERE DID YOU GET SUCH A CRAZY NOTION? THIS IS AMERICA! YOU DON'T GO BEATING UP PEOPLE BECAUSE THEY'RE DIFFERENT...

LEAVE ME ALONE, POP... WILL YUH?



'AND THEN, WHEN HE FINALLY GRADUATED HIGH SCHOOL, HE TOLD US...TOLD US HE'D MADE UP HIS MIND. THE UNGRATEFUL SNOT. THE UNGRATEFUL...

THAT'S RIGHT! I'M NOT GOING TO COLLEGE! I'M GOING OUT AND GET A JOB... EARN MY OWN MONEY...

BUT WE'VE SAVED... SKIMPED...SCOURNED...JUST TO PUT YOU THROUGH COLLEGE! IS THIS THE THANKS WE GET?



'I HAD TO GO. IT WAS MY TEST. I JOINED THAT GANG BECAUSE I ADMIRE THE FELLOWS IN IT. THEY WERE ALL INDEPENDENT. THEY WERE SYMBOLS. I LONGED TO BE INDEPENDENT TOO. SO I WENT OUT THAT NIGHT OVER MY FOLKS' OBJECTIONS...'

NINE O'CLOCK TONIGHT, KENNY! YOU SURE YOU CAN MAKE IT? I KNOW YOUR FOLKS...

I'LL MAKE IT, HICKY! DON'T WORRY!



'HE WAS SO RIGHTEOUS, MY POP! SO FAIR! WHERE DID HE THINK I GOT SUCH A CRAZY NOTION? DID HE THINK I MADE IT UP? I HEARD THINGS... IN MY OWN HOME, I HEARD THINGS...'

YOU LIVE IN A NEIGHBORHOOD FOR TWENTY YEARS AND THEN...JUST LIKE THAT...THEY START MOVIN' IN. YOU WAIT, WILMA. BEFORE YOU KNOW IT, THE LAND VALUES 'ROUND HERE WILL DROP! SOMETHIN' SHDULO BE DONE!




'I HAD TO GET THAT JOB AND EARN MY OWN MONEY! THEY COULDN'T UNDERSTAND! THEY NEVER COULD. ALL MY LIFE I'D BEGGED FOR EVERY DIME! I COULDN'T TAKE GIRLS ON DATES. I COULDN'T DO ANYTHING. THEY WERE ALWAYS SAYING IT FOR ME... I HAD TO...'

HI, KENNY. HEY, WE'RE GOIN' TO THE MOVIES TONIGHT. GET A GIRL AND JOIN US. NO STAGS, NOW!

TH-THANKS, HICKY...IF I DECIDE, I'LL MEET YOU...





I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM AFTER THAT, WILMA. I JUST DON'T KNOW. HE USED TO COME HOME AT ALL HOURS... SNAP AT US... DISAPPEAR FOR DAYS AT A TIME...

KENNY!
KENNY...


YOUR MOTHER'S BEEN FRANTIC, KENNY. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN FOR TWO NIGHTS...

NO PLACE!
LEAVE ME ALONE!



G'MON, KENNY, BABY! TRY ONE, JUST ONE PUFF! S'MATTER? SCARED, BIG BOY?

MEH! SCARED?! GIM'ME THAT REEFER!




I KNEW SOMETHING WAS WRONG WITH HIM. I KNEW IT THE MINUTE I SAW HIM THE NIGHT HE CAME HOME FOR... FOR THE LAST TIME. HIS EYES!

I NEED DUGH, MA. I NEED IT BAD. CAN YOU LEND ME TWENTY BUCKS?


KENNY.
MY BABY...

GET OUT!
GET OUT OF HERE AND DON'T EVER COME BACK!



THEY FAILED ME! WHEN I NEEDED THEM MOST, THEY FAILED ME! THE REEFERS HAD LEO TO STRONGER STUFF... UNTIL I'D BECOME AN ADDICT. I COULDN'T PAY FOR IT, AND THEY FAILED ME...

I'VE GOT TO GET THE DUGH!
I'VE GOT TO GET IT SOMEWHERE!




THE MINUTE I SAW THE COP, I KNEW KENNY'D DONE SOMETHING WRONG. I COULDO SEE IT ON THE COP'S FACE WHEN I OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS RING...

WHERE'S YOUR BOY, MR. VORHEES? I WANT HIM!

I... I DON'T KNOW, OFFICER!

WHAT DID HE DO, OFFICER?



I'D WAITED IN THE PARK, WAITED UNTIL SOMEONE'D COME ALONG. I WAS DESPERATE. I HAD TO HAVE IT, AND ONLY MONEY WOULD GIVE IT TO ME...

DON'T SCREAM! JUST GIVE ME YOUR POCKET-BOOK AND...

EEEEEEEE...

THE MAN AND THE WOMAN SAT IN THE LIVING-ROOM WATCHING THE MANTEL CLOCK FINGERS POINT TO ELEVEN. THE MAN GRIMACED...THE WOMAN SOBBED AS THE CHIMES BEGAN...



AND AS THE ELEVENTH CHIME ECHOED THROUGH THE HOUSE AND FADED AWAY, THE WOMAN SIGHEQ...THE MAN CURSED...

WHAT DO WE EVER DO TO DESERVE THIS? HOW COULD HE DO THIS TO US? WE... WE DID ALL WE COULD FOR HIM!



WHAT WILL PEOPLE THINK? WHAT ABOUT MY BUSINESS?

THE BOY SAT IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR FEELING THE FIRST SHOCKING HIGH VOLTAGE EXPLODE THROUGH HIS BODY...



AND EVEN AS HIS LIFE FAGED FROM HIS BLISTERED AND SWOLLEN BODY, THE BOY WONDERED...

HOW DID IT HAPPEN? WHY DID I TURN OUT LIKE THIS? I GUESS IT'S BECAUSE I DIDN'T LISTEN TO MY FOLKS. I GUESS..I WAS JUST A BAD SON.



THE END

SHOCK TALK

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear Russ,

SHOCK #9 had more shock-value than a hairpin in an electrical outlet. It was great! My wife, Valerie, thought the cover on this one was absolutely horrifying, and I must admit that I could hardly disagree with her! Mr. Feldstein's genius for cover art never ceases to astound me.

"The October Game" was sure an eye-opener. I always thought that was just a couple of peeled grapes and some spaghetti which was being passed my way. Now I know better. "The Maddlers!" was a gruesome little tale as well. But for sheer gut-wrenching disgust, "Carnion Death!" just couldn't be beaten! It was horrible, awful, twisted, delightful, fun, tasty—um, maybe I better just stop there.

Jim Davis

Pulman, WA

I think that "October Game" by Ray Bradbury in SHOCK #9 was definitely the most horrific of all the horror stories that came out this July. What makes the story so chilling is the fact that this respectable-looking guy kills his own daughter just to get even with his wife. Bradbury does not completely spell it out for you at the end, but he makes you figure it out for yourself. One weakness of the three Ghoulunatics is that they always explain the ending when they should sometimes let the readers figure it out for themselves. Like they say that a joke is never so funny when you have to explain the punchline to someone. The one notable exception where the Ghoulunatics didn't hold your hand at the end was, of course, "Wolf Ball!" (HAUNT 13, yet to come) A company that I worked for once threw me to the wolves, but that's another story.

Speaking of "Wolf Ball!", here is a tip for Dave Rodriguez. You must carefully consider all of the available information about each of the four characters. Then you must choose which one that YOU would sacrifice, and that is the one that got thrown off the sleigh. For what it is worth here is my analysis of who the wolf ball is:

*

Warren Standiford

Sunnyvale, CA

Your analysis deleted for use when we run the story (in HAUNT 13). Down, boy!

Also available this month are CRYPT and WEIRD SCIENCE. Watch for VAULT, WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED next month. Don't forget HAUNT, INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION and CRIME. Out them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic for details).

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, \$2 each (subject to availability). All others up thru issue #3, \$1.60 each, issues #4 and up, \$2 each. Add \$6 per order (\$10 outside US) per S&H.

We want MORE letters! Write to:

SHOCK
RUSS COCHRAN
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

**THIS COMIC REPRINTS
SHOCK SUSPENSIONSTORIES "10" (AUG/SEP 53)**

COVER by Jack Kamen

"The Sacrifice"

"...So Shall Ye Reap!"

"Home Run!"

"Sweetie-Pie!"

Jack Kamen

Wally Wood

Joe Orlando

Reed Crandall



A little glimmer behind the scenes of EC: We have no idea, specifically, why the change was made but the third panel of page 4 of "...So Shall Ye Reap!" was changed between the time color guides were prepared and the book was printed. It is the color guide's panel we run here.

Perhaps coincidentally, perhaps not, SHOCK 10's letter page was to have been a diatribe against an accusation of obscenity in EC comics. As actually run, the "editorial" shrank to two paragraphs, dropped the word obscenity and apologized for having offended some readers.

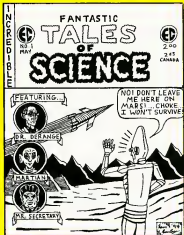
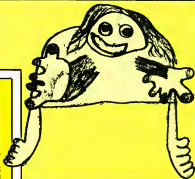
It would have been fun to have been a fly on the wall at 225 Lafayette Street that summer!

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We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We ask for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and do not release you directly after you are then published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters. If so we need your address on the individual letter.

I've heard of ingrown toenail, but not outgrown toenail! Still and all, that must be me as a barefoot boy as drawn by Alex Sebout, Phoenix, AZ. This will be a special all-graphic issue of THE CRYPT-KEEPER's PAGE OF...

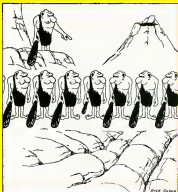
FINE ARTS #23



ANOTHER BOGUS comic cover, again from Sam Rowley, Anchorage, AK. Could that be the famous robot with a car battery for a heart, Adem Link? —CK



WHY IS this skull smiling? Because he's been hanging around the EC offices all day, and no one's mistaken him once for that ugly pug with the misshapen mug, The Vault-Keeper! —CK



"AND THIS YEAR— NOBEL PEACE PRIZE GO... TO... KRAGG!"

WHO SAYS we're not PC (Potentially Correct)? A thoughty thought-piece from Rick Olsen of Minneapolis, MN. I like it! (Will someone explain it to me?) —CK

WHY NO text pieces this leh? Simple. A job-related injury. I sprained my lip reading submissions. But I'll be better soon and when I am, look out! —CK

Send your contriibe (not returnable, not too long, not too big, legible doublespaced text &/or bold black art. Warning...we edit!) to:

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S PAGE OF FINE ARTS

RUSS COCHRAN

POB 469

WEST PLAINS MO 65775

We welcome contributions. We cannot promise to return, acknowledge or publish contributions. We edit for clarity, accuracy and style. We summarily withhold email address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We consent to acknowledge publication. To do so we need your address on the individual contribution.

OPERATION!



The anaesthetist turned the wheel on the gleaming instrument panel, at one side of the operating table. There was an almost imperceptible hiss; when the quivering needle reach half-way toward the area marked FULL, the anaesthetist relaxed his grip on the wheel. He turned and nodded to the battery of doctors waiting tensely beside the surgery table.

"The patient is under the influence of anaesthesia," he said nervously, indicating the figure stretched silently before them. "The Generalissimo is ready for surgery!"

The anaesthetist stepped back, a nerve twitching at his temple as he eyed the grim men in bowler hats standing around the room like angels of evil. The Secret Police, the anaesthetist thought fearfully. Wherever the Dictator moves, these gunmen go also. The recent scandals about doctors murdering high government officials is making them redouble their vigilance. Imagine if something happened to the Leader while he was undergoing SURGERY . . . !

The Chief Surgeon spoke sharply, a flicker of fear in his eyes as he looked at the anaesthetist. Apprehension permeated the room as the anaesthetist stepped forward and examined the instrument panel. Slowly, with great delicacy, the anaesthetist moved the dial forward slightly, toward FULL. The hiss grew instantly louder, like a wave falling upon a distant beach.

There was a sudden grunt; without turning the anaesthetist was aware of movement behind him. It was a man in a bowler hat, his jaw set belligerently, barking out something

about having trapped a traitor determined to kill the Leader! The dial was perilously close to FULL when the anaesthetist was seized and heard accusations spat in his face. The control wheel, he realized just before he fainted from terror, had been jammed by the sudden motion. The louder hiss was ample evidence that it was stuck at FULL!

* * * * *

The Leader felt as if he was floating strangely, high over the vast lands he dominated. Through the curious haze that enveloped him as he floated, he was aware of a frightening heaviness inside his head, as if his skin were being stretched drum-tight. He tried to cry out that it was all a mistake . . . why was he swelling with such incredible speed, like a grotesque balloon? What was this strange hissing in his ears . . . this painful bloating . . . as if he was being pumped full of air? He tried to scream, but his mouth had become buried under deep layers of fat, his nostrils clogged with his own agonized skin. He was drowning . . . struggling frantically to gulp air into his tortured lungs . . . when the hiss grew in volume until all else was being blotted out by the ghastly roar in his brain. Then there was a dreadful ripping sound, and he felt himself spinning in a pool of blood . . .

* * * * *

The explosion reverberated through the shocked room. "T-The Leader!" whispered the Chief Surgeon in horror, looking at the gruesome mess still writhing on the table in front of him. The man in the bowler hat stared as if hypnotized, releasing the arm of the still unconscious anaesthetist, apparently unaware of the stream of blood that had spurted over him . . . of the still-jerking nerve ends that had splattered over his coat. "Our g-glorious Leader," he said in awe. H-He . . . he must've been overdosed with Gas! He BLEW UP!

HOME RUN!

THERE WAS A SILENCE SURROUNDING THE ROCKET-SHIP... A MAJESTIC SILENCE THAT ECHOED OF THE VAST VACUUM OF SPACE AROUND IT. INSIDE ITS GLEAMING HULL, THE FOUR EARTHMEN STOOD IN AWE, THEIR EYES GLUED ON THE VIEW-SCREEN BEFORE THEM, WATCHING MARS SWEEP TOWARD THEM... RED MARS, MYSTERIOUS MARS. FOR A WHILE, THEY DID NOT SPEAK. THEY ONLY STOOD, AS IF LOST IN PRAYER TO THE RUST-COLORED GLOBULAR IDOL. THEN, FINALLY, ONE OF THEM WHISPERED...

IN A FEW HOURS, WE
WILL BE THERE...
THE FIRST HUMAN
BEINGS TO REACH
MARS!

... AND WE OWE IT ALL TO
YOU, DOCTOR MULLER!
MANKIND OWES IT ALL
TO YOU!

YOU SHOULD BE VERY PROUD,
DOCTOR MULLER. WITHOUT
YOUR GENIUS, MAN WOULD
STILL BE GROVELING BACK
THERE ON EARTH... FIRING
ROCKETS BUT A FEW HUN-
DRED MILES BEYOND THE
ATMOSPHERE... TRYING
AGAIN AND AGAIN... AND
ALWAYS FAILING! YOU,
ALONE, HAVE CONQUERED
SPACE.

THERE IS A
DRIVE WITHIN
EACH OF US,
GENTLEMEN.
A DRIVE
TOWARDS A
DISTANT, OFTEN
UNATTAINABLE
GOAL. MINE
WAS THIS...
REACHING
MARS!



DOCTOR MULLER'S VOICE WAS SOFT, ALMOST SING-
SONG. HE SPOKE AS IF HE'D OFTEN REHEARSED THE
WORDS THAT FLOWED FROM HIS MOUTH. HIS EYES
WERE GLUED ON THE RED-SPHERE LOOMING LARGER
AND LARGER ON THE VIEW-SCREEN...

TWO YEARS AGO, THE MAN YOU SEE STANDING BEFORE
YOU WAS AN OBSCURE ATOMIC SCIENTIST WORKING IN
ONE OF THE MANY A.E.C. LABORATORIES. HIS JOB
WAS MOSTLY ROUTINE... READING GAUGES AND DIALS,
RECORDING, TESTING, REPORTING. HE WAS NOTHING
BUT A COG IN THE HUGE MACHINE OF ATOMIC
DEVELOPMENT.



BUT SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THAT OLD DOCTOR
MULLER. SOMETHING CHANGED HIM INTO THE MAN YOU
SEE. IT WAS LIKE AN AWAKENING... A REBIRTH. I
REMEMBER NOW, ONE MORNING, I LEFT MY STATION AT
THE PILE AND WALKED INTO MY SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE...

DOCTOR CAXTON, I WOULD
LIKE TO BE TRANSFERRED!

WHA...? TRANS-
FERRED? BUT,
MULLER! I
THOUGHT YOU WERE
SO HAPPY HERE!



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSORY

YOU THOUGHT WRONG, SIR. I AM NOT HAPPY HERE! I WANT TO BE TRANSFERRED TO RESEARCH... ENGINE RESEARCH!

MULLER! YOU SURPRISE ME! YOU'VE ALWAYS SEEMED CONTENT TO OPERATE THE PILE AND RECORD YOUR FINDINGS...

PERHAPS IT SEEMED THAT WAY TO YOU, SIR, BUT REGARDLESS OF HOW IT LOOKED, I DESPISED THE WORK. MY MIND WAS OUT THERE... ON THE STARS...

STARS? ARE YOU INTERESTED IN SPACE TRAVEL, MULLER?

I AM... DESPERATELY!

BUT SPACE-TRAVEL IS YEARS OFF. YOU MAY NEVER LIVE TO SEE IT.



SPACE TRAVEL COULD BE HERE TOMORROW WITH THE PROPER ENGINE. AND I THINK I CAN DEVELOP THAT ENGINE. I WANT THAT CHANCE...

ALL RIGHT, MULLER. I'M SORRY TO SEE YOU GO! HEAVEN KNOWS YOU'VE BEEN A DEVOTED WORKER. AND, QUITE FRANKLY, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD IT IN YOU TO DO RESEARCH, BUT IF IT'S WHAT YOU WANT...



AND SO, A WEEK LATER I WAS TRANSFERRED, AS PER MY REQUEST, TO THE RESEARCH DIVISION OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION, ATOMIC ENGINE DEVELOPMENT SECTION...

GLAD TO HAVE YOU WITH US, DOCTOR MULLER. THE FACILITIES OF THE LABORATORY ARE ALL YOURS. IS THERE ANY PARTICULAR PHASE OF OUR WORK THAT YOU ARE INTERESTED IN?

I AM INTERESTED IN DEVELOPING AN EFFICIENT ATOMIC ENGINE CAPABLE OF POWERING A ROCKET-SHIP, SIR!



I REMEMBER HOW MY NEW SUPERIOR LAUGHED...

A ROCKET-SHIP ENGINE? REALLY, DOCTOR MULLER! LET US BE PRACTICAL. WE HAVE DEVELOPED AN ATOMIC-ENGINE FOR AN AIRPLANE, AND WE HAVE DONE THE SAME FOR A SUBMARINE, BUT THE AMOUNT OF ENERGY NEEDED IS SMALL COMPARED TO THAT NEEDED FOR A ROCKET-SHIP.

I AM AWARE OF THAT, SIR. BUT I HAVE SOME THEORIES... AND I WOULD LIKE TO TRY.



...HOW HE SHRUGGED...

ALL RIGHT. BUT I'M AFRAID OUR ATOMIC KNOW-HOW AT THE PRESENT TIME PROHIBITS SUCH A PROJECT. HOWEVER... IF YOUR HEART IS SET ON IT...GO AHEAD AND TRY!

THANK YOU, SIR.



'AND SO I SET TO WORK. IN LESS THAN TWO MONTHS, I HAD COMPLETED MY DESIGNS.'

YOU ASKED TO SEE ME, MULLER. YES, SIR. I HAVE SOMETHING I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW YOU...



'I SPREAD MY BLUE-PRINT DESIGNS BEFORE MY SUPERIOR...'

IF MY CALCULATIONS ARE CORRECT, SIR, THIS ENGINE WILL DELIVER A THRUST FORCE CAPABLE OF DRIVING SIX TIMES ITS WEIGHT TO A SPEED OF SEVEN MILES PER SECOND... GOOD LORD. THAT'S... ESCAPE VELOCITY!



'I NODDED...'

YES SIR, ESCAPE VELOCITY... THE SPEED NEEDED TO BREAK AWAY FROM EARTH'S GRAVITATIONAL FIELD...

I... I'M SPEECHLESS, MULLER. YOU... YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO GO AHEAD WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS ENGINE...



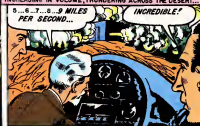
'WORK ON THE ENGINE BEGAN. AT THE END OF ONE YEAR, IT WAS COMPLETED. THE DAY WE WERE TO TEST MY ENGINE ARRIVED. IT HAD BEEN SET UP IN A DESERTED SECTION OF THE ARMY PROVING GROUNDS AT WHITE SANDS. A SMALL CROWD OF HIGH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND ARMY BRASS WERE PRESENT.'



READY, MULLER?

READY, SIR!

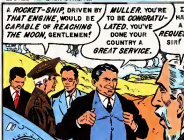
'THE ENGINE HAD BEEN ENCLOSED IN A SMALL SQUARE CONCRETE BUILDING LINED WITH SEVEN-INCH WALLS TO PROTECT THE OBSERVING PARTY FROM RADIATION. WE STOOD AT A SAFE DISTANCE, WHERE A CONTROL PANEL HAD BEEN SET UP. I THREW THE SWITCH. A DULL ROAR, INCREASING IN VOLUME, THUNDERED ACROSS THE DESERT.'



0...6...7...8...9 MILES PER SECOND...

INCREDIBLE!

'I TURNED THE ENGINE OFF. THE GROUND BELOW OUR FEET STOPPED VIBRATING. THE THUNDER ECHED AWAY INTO SILENCE. THE GATHERED OBSERVERS LOOKED AT EACH OTHER...'



A ROCKET-SHIP, DRIVEN BY THAT ENGINE, WOULD BE CAPABLE OF REACHING THE MOON, GENTLEMEN!

MULLER, YOU'RE TO BE CONGRATULATED. YOU'VE DONE YOUR COUNTRY A GREAT SERVICE. I HAVE A REQUEST, SIR!

I WOULD LIKE TO BE GIVEN PERMISSION TO HELP WITH THE DESIGNING OF THE ROCKET-SHIP WHICH MY ENGINE WILL POWER.

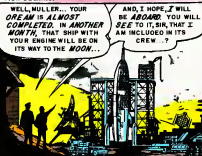
OF COURSE, MULLER. OF COURSE.



'AND SO, AGAIN I WAS TRANSFERRED... THIS TIME TO THE ARMY AIR FORCE ROCKET AND GUIDED MISSILE DIVISION. THERE, FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, ENGINEERS AND DRAFTSMEN WORKED ON THE DESIGNS AND SPECIFICATIONS OF THE FIRST ATOMIC-POWERED ROCKET-SHIP...'



'I HELPED WHEREVER I COULD... MAKING SUGGESTIONS. REDESIGNING... CHANGING. FINALLY, ACTUAL CONSTRUCTION BEGAN...'



'YOU KNOW THE REST, GENTLEMEN... THE ARGUMENTS AND DEBATES. I FOUGHT DESPERATELY FOR THE MARS OBJECTIVE. AND I WON...'



'THE SECONDS TICKED OFF. I THREW THE SWITCH. MY ENGINE ROARED. OUR MARS BOUND SHIP SHUDDERED. THEN LEAPED INTO THE STAR-STUDDED SKY...'



THERE WAS A SILENCE SURROUNDING THE ROCKET-SHIP... A MAJESTIC SILENCE THAT ECHOED OF THE VAST VACUUM OF SPACE AROUND IT. DOCTOR MULLER STARED AT THE NEARING RED SPHERE...

YES, GENTLEMEN. THERE IS A *DRIVE* WITHIN EACH OF US. *NIHE* WAS TO REACH MARS!

WHEN DID YOU *FIRST* FEEL THIS COMPULSION, DOCTOR?



THE *GUY* THAT SUDDENLY APPEARED IN DOCTOR MULLER'S HAND UNDERLINED EMPHATICALLY HIS STATEMENT...

I'M NOT JOKING, GENTLEMEN! I *CRASHED ON EARTH OVER TWO YEARS AGO!* I TOLD YOU THAT THE MAN STANDING BEFORE YOU WAS AN *OBSCURE ATOMIC SCIENTIST*. WELL, HE WAS!



'AND I... I AM A *MARTIAN*. MY TRUE SHAPE IS THAT OF AN *EVER-CHANGING PROTOPLASMIC MASS* CAPABLE OF ASSUMING THE SHAPE OF WHATEVER I ABSORB. I SLITHERED FROM MY WRECKED SCOUT-SHIP UNHURT...'



DOCTOR MULLER TURNED AND SMILED...

WHEN I *CRASHED ON EARTH*, GENTLEMEN.

G-CRASHED?! OH, COME, MULLER. DON'T JOKE WITH US!



'AND I KNEW THAT I HAD TO GET BACK TO MARS... MY HOME... AT ALL COSTS. BUT YOU... YOU *EARTHLINGS*... HAD NOT DEVELOPED SPACE-FLIGHT. AND THEN I HIT UPON MY *PLAN*. I DESTROYED THE REMAINS OF MY SHIP...'



'I MOVED ACROSS YOUR WORLD BY NIGHT, KEEPING HIDDEN, UNTIL I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR. DOCTOR MULLER...'

THAT SUCKING, GULPING SOUND?! WHO... WHO'S THERE? GOOD LORD!



'YES, GENTLEMEN. I *PICKED ON DOCTOR MULLER*. I ABSORBED HIM... ASSIMILATED HIM...'



... I BECAME HIM... ASSUMED HIS SHAPE...'

THE FIGURE BEFORE THEM, BRANDING THE GUN.
CONTINUED...

WHAT BETTER METHOD COULD I HAVE USED TO RETURN TO MARS THAN TO HELP YOU EARTHINGS DEVELOP THE MEANS...SPACE-TRAVEL. THIS WAS LIKE CHILD'S PLAY FOR ME, COMPARING THIS TO THE SPACE-SHIP'S WE HAVE IS LIKE COMPARING YOUR BICYCLES TO YOUR JET-PLANES! BUT I HAD TO BE CAREFUL! I COULDN'T AFFORD TO AROUSE SUSPICION!



IT WILL CONTINUE! THERE WILL BE MORE TRIPS... MORE ABSORPTIONS... UNTIL ENOUGH OF US ARE ON EARTH TO CONQUER IT, YOU... GET HIM!



THEY STRUGGLED. A SHOT RANG OUT...



THE FIGURE POINTED TO THE VIEW-SCREEN...

IN A FEW MINUTES WE ARE GOING TO LAND. OTHERS LIKE ME WILL BE WAITING... READY TO ASSIMILATE AND ABSORB YOU JUST AS I HAVE ABSORBED DOCTOR MULLER, AND WE WILL RETURN AGAIN TO EARTH. IT IS THE BEGINNING...



DOCTOR MULLER FELL TO THE ALLOY DECK FLOOR... A BULLET HOLE IN HIS CHEST...



THE SHIP CAME DOWN... KICKING UP THE RED DUST, IT CAME TO REST ON THE RED-PLANET'S SURFACE. THE THREE EARTHINGS ROSE FROM THEIR SHOCK-COUCHES...



MARS? WE'VE REACHED MARS?

TOO BAD MULLER DIDN'T LIVE TO SEE IT!

MULLER...? HE... HE... LOOK!

ON THE DECK, WHERE MULLER'S BODY HAD BEEN, THERE NOW LAY A SHAPELESS QUIVERING PROTOPLASMIC MASS.



GOOD LORD! HE... HE...

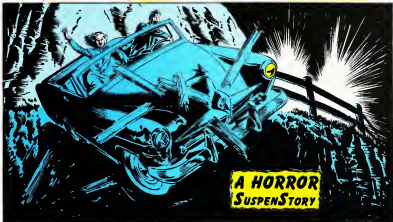
LISTEN!

BELOW, THE THREE EARTHINGS HEARD THE UNMISTAKABLE CLANG OF THE SHIP'S PORT, AND THEN, ALMOST IMPERCEPTIBLY, THE SOUNDS...THE SLITHERING, SUCKING, GULPING SOUNDS...

THE END 5

SWEETIE-PIE

SALLY SCREAMED. PHILIP'S CRY OF DISMAY RATTLED IN HIS THROAT AS HE SPUN THE WHEEL OF HIS SPEEDING CONVERTIBLE...SWERVING TO AVOID THE GLARING HEADLIGHTS AHEAD...CAREENING OFF THE ROAD TO AVOID THE IMMINENT HEAD-ON COLLISION. THE CLOAK OF NIGHT WAS SUDDENLY PIERCED WITH THE KNIFE-BLADE OF SQUEALING BRAKES. TWO TONS OF METAL AND GLASS AND RUBBER AND HUMAN FLESH EXPLODED THROUGH THE GUARD-RAIL AT THE ROAD EDGE. THERE WAS A SPLINTERING SHRIEKING CRASH AS THE CAR LEAPED INTO THE NIGHT, OVER THE EMBANKMENT, AND DOWN THE SHEER FACE OF THE RAVINE...



THE BLACK BLANKET OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS DESCENDED OVER PHILIP WHERE HE LAY IN THE TALL GRASS, THROWN CLEAR OF THE SMASHED AUTOMOBILE. IT DESCENDED LIKE A CURTAIN, CLOSING OFF THE NIGHT-SOUNDS ... STILLING SALLY'S SCREAMS OF PAIN...



PHILIP FLOATED IN A WHIRLPOOL, SPINNING SLOWLY, REMEMBERING THE ETERNAL SECONDS BEFORE THE CRASH...REMEMBERING SALLY'S GASP...



THEY'D BEEN MARRIED ONLY A FEW HOURS, PHILIP AND SALLY. THEY'D BEEN SPEEDING NORTHWARD TOWARD THE LITTLE HOTEL THEY'D CHOSEN FOR THEIR HONEYMOON, AND SALLY'D WARNED HIM...

PLEASE, PHILIP, DARLING!
DON'T DRIVE SO FAST! IT
MAKES ME NERVOUS!

IS IT MY DRIVING,
BABY, OR THE FACT
THAT YOU'RE A
BRAND NEW
BRIDE?



PHILIP HAD TAKEN A WELL-EARNED VACATION FROM HIS JOB AS A REPORTER FOR THE CONSOLIDATED PRESS SERVICE TO MARRY SALLY. HE'D LEFT IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT A BIG STORY HE'D BEEN WORKING ON HAD NOT, AS YET, BEEN CONCLUDED...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, YOU'RE GETTING MARRIED?? HERE WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE BIGGEST STORY TO COME FROM THESE PARTS IN YEARS, AND YOU WANT TO TAKE OFF!

PUT WILLIAMS ON IT, CHIEF. I HAVE A HUNCH IT WON'T BREAK TILL I GET BACK ANYWAY!



PHILIP'S STORY HAD BEEN A GORY ONE. THERE'D BEEN SEVERAL SERIOUS AUTOMOBILE WRECKS IN THE AREA... AND ALL OF THEM WERE THE SAME...

THIS IS O'HARA... STATE PATROL. YEAH. ANOTHER ONE! PILED UP ON ROUTE NINE ABOUT SEVEN MILES OUT. YEAH. SAME DEAL...



NO BODIES IN THE WRECK. NOT A SIGN OF ONE... ANYWHERE AROUND.



WHEREVER THESE WRECKS OCCURRED... AND THEY'D BECOME MORE AND MORE FREQUENT... THE VICTIMS HAD JUST DISAPPEARED...

PEOPLE JUST DON'T WALK AWAY FROM SMASH-UPS LIKE THAT PHIL. NOT EVERY TIME! SOME OF THOSE WRECKS WERE BAD ENOUGH TO KILL... YET THERE WEREN'T ANY BODIES! GET ON THIS, EH, BOY? SEE WHAT YOU CAN DIG UP!

VERY FUNNY! OKAY, CHIEF.



AFTER EACH WRECK, THE OWNER OF THE CAR HAD BEEN TRACED THROUGH THE REGISTRATION. PHIL HAD INTERVIEWED THE FAMILY OF ONE...

HE NEVER CAME HOME. HE JUST VANISHED. SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO HIM. I KNOW IT!

I'M SURE HE'LL TURN UP, MA'AM!



AND THEN THE FIRST BODY'D BEEN FOUND... WEEKS LATER... MILES FROM THE SCENE OF THE ACCIDENT...

MAMA. DADDY. COME QUICK. LOOK. WHERE? WHA... A MAN. SLEEPING. CHOKO...



HE'D BEEN DRIVING ONE OF THE CARS THAT HAD BEEN WRECKED. HE'D BEEN A HIGH-SCHOOL PRINCIPAL... THEY'D TAKEN HIS CORPSE INTO TOWN TO THE MORGUE... PERFORMED AN AUTOPSY...

HIS BLOOD HAS BEEN COMPLETELY DRAINED FROM HIS BODY. NOTICE THE TWO PUNCTURE MARKS IN HIS THROAT...



ONE OF PHILIP'S FELLOW REPORTERS... NOTED FOR HIS SENSE OF HUMOR... HAD INTIMATED...

IT'S THE WORK OF A VAMPIRE, PHIL. OL' BOY! A VAMPIRE!

YOU'RE CRAZY, EDDIE. VAMPIRES ARE MYTHS.



BUT MORE BOODIES BEGAN TO APPEAR, SCATTERED ABOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND EACH OF THEM BORE...

...THE SAME TWO PUNCTURE-MARKS IN THE THROAT!

SEE, PHILLY? WHAT DO YOU SAY NOW?!



IT WAS CRAZY, BUT WHAT ELSE COULD PHILIP BELIEVE...

A VAMPIRE! BAH! YOU'VE BEEN SEEING TOO MANY 'B' PICTURES!

THEN YOU EXPLAIN IT, CHIEF. EACH OF THE BODIES FOUND HAD BEEN INVOLVED IN ONE OF THOSE AUTO-MOBILE WRECKS WE'VE BEEN HAVING, AND EACH OF THEM WAS DRAINED OF ITS BLOOD! GOT A BETTER ANSWER?



THE CHIEF HAD LAUGHED...

AND I SUPPOSE YOUR VAMPIRE CAUSED THOSE WRECKS SO IT COULD OBTAIN VICTIMS...

I HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT, BUT IT'S AS GOOD A REASON AS ANY!



THE POLICE HAD LAUGHED AT PHILIP'S THEORY...

WE'VE ONLY RECOVERED FOUR BODIES SO FAR, PHIL. WE'VE HAD OVER TEN WRECKS. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THAT?

THE OTHER VICTIMS WILL TURN UP SOON. YOU'LL SEE, LIEUTENANT!



BUT PHIL'D BEEN WRONG, THERE'D BEEN MORE WRECKS, BUT OUT OF THE TOTAL NUMBER, FOURTEEN, ONLY SIX BODIES HAD BEEN FOUND...

I CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, SALLY! WHY HAVEN'T THEY FOUND THE OTHER BODIES INVOLVED IN THE WRECKS?

WHY CAN'T YOU FORGET YOUR GRUESOME STORY AND COME KISS ME, HONEY?



THEY'VE GOT TO LISTEN TO ME, NOW, SALLY. THEY'VE GOT TO. IT IS A VAMPIRE.

PHIL, I'VE WAITED AS LONG AS I CAN! IF YOU DON'T MARRY ME TOMORRO

A man in a yellow suit is shown floating in a blue, swirling vortex. The man is positioned in the center of the vortex, with his arms and legs spread out. The vortex is composed of concentric, swirling lines of blue, creating a sense of motion and depth. The background is black, which makes the blue vortex and the yellow suit stand out.

PHILIP OPENED HIS EYES. THE BLANKET LIFTED. HE LOOKED TOWARD THE MASS OF TWISTED STEEL AND SMASHED GLASS AND TORN CANVAS THAT HAD ONCE BEEN HIS CONVERTIBLE. HE SAW THE FIGURE BEND OVER SALLY'S STILL BODY, LIFTING IT...



HE TRIED TO CRY OUT. NO SOUND CAME FROM HIS THROAT. HE TRIED TO MOVE. HE WAS PARALYZED. HE COULD ONLY LIE THERE WATCHING THE FIGURE CARRY SALLY BACK UP THE SLOPE TO THE WAITING STATION-WAGON...



HE COULD ONLY LIE AND WAIT UNTIL THE FIGURE RETURNED FOR HIM...



HE FELT HIMSELF LIFTED, CARRIED, PLUNGED INTO THE REAR OF THE STATION WAGON BESIDE SALLY'S MOTIONLESS BODY...



AND THEN, THE BLANKET DESCENDED ONCE MORE WITH THE MESHING OF GEARS AS THE STATION WAGON PULLED AWAY...



WHEN HE CAME TO AGAIN, HE FOUND HIMSELF INSIDE A DARKENED ROOM. HE WAS COLD. IT WAS AS IF THE ROOM WERE REFRIGERATED. AND AROUND HIM...



... AROUND HIM LAY OTHER BODIES... BODIES RIGID WITH RIGOR MORTIS... BODIES BLUE FROM THE COLD... BODIES WITH SMALL PUNCTURE MARKS IN THEIR THROATS...



HE TRIED TO MOVE. HE COULDN'T. HE TRIED TO CRY OUT. AGAIN THE SOUND SEEMED TO DIE IN HIS THROAT. HE LAY THERE...SHIVERING...LISTENING. AND THEN HE HEARD THE SOUND...THE STRANGE, THROBBING SOUND... COMING FROM BEHIND A DOOR.



HER NAME ECHOED THROUGH THE GOLD ROOM. PHILIP'S VOICE HAD RETURNED. HE SCREAMED...



THE FIGURE MOVED FORWARD, LEERING...



PHILIP TRIED TO MOVE. HE COULDN'T...



WAS SALLY STILL ALIVE... OR WAS SHE AT THIS VERY MOMENT SLIPPING INTO THE ARMS OF DEATH... HER BLOOD BEING SUCKED FROM HER BODY BY THIS FIENDISH VAMPIRE.



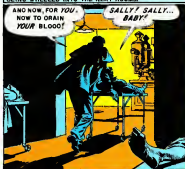
THE THROBBING SOUND DIED AWAY. FOOTSTEPS APPROACHED, THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN...



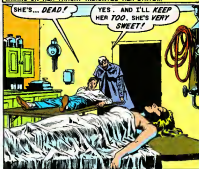
I MERELY SET UP TWO LAMPS ON TRIPODS AT THE PROPER LOCATION AND WAIT. WHEN MY VICTIM'S CAR APPROACHES, I SNAP THEM ON. THE CAR SWERVES... AND I HAVE WHAT I NEED...



PHILIP FELT THINGS MOVING PAST HIM. HE WAS BEING WHEELED INTO THE NEXT ROOM...



SALLY LAY ON A TABLE... WHITE... COLD. THE PUNCTURE MARKS ON HER THROAT INDICATED HER STATE...



THE HORRIBLE FIEND MOVED ACROSS THE ROOM, A SWITCH CLICKED, THE THROBING SOUND STARTED...



THE BITTERNESS THAT PEOPLE CARRY THROUGH LIFE IS OFTEN REFLECTED IN THEIR PHYSICAL MAKE-UP. HIGH-SCHOOL PRINCIPALS... LIBRARIANS... BUS DRIVERS... THEY'RE ALL BITTER... ACID. I TURN THOSE BACK!



HE CAME TOWARDS PHILIP WITH TWO NEEDLE-LIKE TUBES WITH RUBBER NOSES ATTACHED...



THE THING BENT OVER PHILIP, PLUMBING THE TWO NEEDLES INTO HIS THROAT...



PHILIP FELT HIMSELF FADING. HE COULD HARDLY ASK THE QUESTION... HARDLY HEAR THE ANSWER...



**HEE-HEE! I'M GOING TO DO
LIKE THESE TWO GOOFY
GHOULUNATICS, AND GET MY
OWN SUBSCRIPTIONS TO ALL
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GLAD CRYPT #5



GLAD CRYPT #6



GLAD VAULT #1



GLAD VAULT #2



GLAD VAULT #3



GLAD VAULT #4



GLAD VAULT #5



GLAD VAULT #6



GLAD WEIRD #1



GLAD WEIRD #2



GLAD WEIRD #3



GLAD WEIRD #4



GLAD HAUNT #1



GLAD HAUNT #2

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W FAN 5 (1951)

#6: VAULT 32 (1953)
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GLAD WEIRD SCIENCE

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**JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
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NOAH'S



THE TRYST!



**A CRIME
SUSPENSE STORY**



SHE WAS FRESH OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, WITH A YOUTHFUL BEAUTY, A CHILDLIKE INNOCENCE THAT FLOORED HIM. ALL HIS LIFE JOHN HENRICKS HAD BEEN SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE COMPLETELY PURE, SOMEONE COMPLETELY UNSULLIED BY LIFE... AND BY MEN! IN IMAGINATION, HE LISTENED AS SHE SPoke.

"I RECEIVED THE HIGHEST MARKS IN MY CLASS! AND I'LL WORK HARD... **REALLY!** I'M SURE I COULD MAKE YOU AN EFFICIENT SECRETARY IF YOU'LL ONLY GIVE ME A CHANCE!"



JULIE ADAMS FINISHED HER LITTLE SPEECH AND SAT NERVOUSLY, GAZING INTO HER LAP. JOHN HENRICKS SUDDENLY REALIZED HE HAD BEEN STARRING AT HER AND BOUNDED HIMSELF...

"I HAD BEEN HOPING TO FIND A SECRETARY WITH SOME... **EXPERIENCE!** HOWEVER, I'M SURE YOU'LL DO NICELY! WEE ADAMS... YOU'RE **Hired!**"

"OH, MR. HENRICKS, I'M SO **THRILLED!** YOU WON'T BE **SORRY!** I **PROMISE** YOU!"



JOHN HENDRICKS HAD NEVER DREAMED ANY GIRL COULD COME TO MEAN SO MUCH TO HIM IN SO SHORT A TIME. SHE DOMINATED HIS EVERY THOUGHT, AND FIED A BASSING JEALOUSIST WHEN HE SAW HER WITH ANYONE ELSE...

MR. DOWLES, I'LL THANK YOU NOT TO MAKE MISS ADAMS' DESK A SPOT FOR SOCIALITIES! REMEMBER...THIS IS A BUSINESS OFFICE!

Oh, YES, SIR? I'M SORRY, MR. HENDRICKS!



HE MOVED JULIE INTO HIS PRIVATE OFFICE WHERE HE COULD BE CERTAIN THE OFFICE WOLVES WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO DESTROY HER PURITY... BUT EVEN THEN...

I'D LIKE TO LEAVE NOW, MR. HENDRICKS? I HAVE A DATE TONIGHT!

A DATE? ER, WHY... I, AH, I'M VERY SORRY, MISS ADAMS, BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO CALL IT OFF! I... I JUST REMEMBERED SOME IMPORTANT WORK THAT MUST BE DONE TONIGHT!



IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE, JOHN DID ALL HE COULD TO KEEP HER FROM OTHER MEN...TO KEEP HER AS CLEAN AND WHOLESOME AS HE WANTED HER TO BE...FOR HIMSELF...AND HE WORRIED DEEPLY.

JULIE, MY JULIE! I MUST PROTECT YOU FROM YOUR OWN INNOCENCE! NO ONE MUST SPOIL YOU! NO ONE!



HE KNEW SHE WAS SO NAIVE THAT ANY FAST-TALKING MAN WOULD FIND HER EASY PREY, AND HE WANTED TO SAVE HER FROM SUCH A FATE...

I CAN'T MAKE HER WORK LATE EVERY NIGHT? AND WHAT ABOUT WEEKENDS? THERE MUST BE A WAY...



HE COULD THINK OF BUT ONE WAY... ONLY ONE *SAFE* METHOD...

Oh...JULIE, I HOPE YOU WON'T THINK ME TOO FORWARD... BUT...WOULD YOU HAVE DINNER WITH ME TONIGHT?

WHY, MR. HENDRICKS? I'D BE DELIGHTED!



HE HAD TO MAKE SURE THAT HE WAS ALWAYS WITH HER...HE HAD TO MONOPOLIZE HER EVERY MINUTE!

I...I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT LIKE TO GO DANCING TONIGHT? AND TOMORROW NIGHT WE COULD SEE A SHOW!

Oh, IT SOUNDS WONDERFUL!



EVERY WEEKEND HE TOOK HER FAR FROM THE CITY, FAR FROM ANY SIGHT OF OR CONTACT WITH MEN...



HE WAS MADLY IN LOVE! EVERY IDEALISTIC DREAM HE EVER HAD ABOUT WOMEN WAS EMBODIED IN THE LOVELY YOUNG GIRL NAMED JULIE. HE WANTED TO MARRY HER... HE *HAD* TO MARRY HER, TO KEEP HER FOR HIMSELF!



—AND DO YOU, JULIE ADAMS, TAKE THIS MAN FOR YOUR LAWFUL WEDDED HUSBAND?

I DO!

IT WAS IMMEDIATELY AFTER THEIR HONEYMOON THAT JOHN BROUGHT JULIE TO LIVE AT HIS BEAUTIFUL COUNTRY ESTATE, SURROUNDED BY MILES OF WOODLANDS...AND COMPLETELY ISOLATED FROM ANY MEN...



OH, JOHN... IT'S *HEAVENLY*!

IT'S ONLY RIGHT THAT AN ANGEL LIKE YOU SHOULD HAVE A *HEAVENLY* PLACE TO LIVE, JULIE!



ANYTHING YOU COULD EVER WANT OR NEED, IS HERE! I... I WANT YOU TO PROMISE NEVER TO LEAVE THE ESTATE UNLESS I'M WITH YOU!

WHY OF COURSE, DARLING! ANYTHING YOU SAY!



YOU'RE SUCH A TREASURE, JULIE!

I... I'D *DIE* IF IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU!

YOU'RE *SWEET* JOHN, SO *VERY* SWEET!



JOHN'S ENTIRE WORLD HAD BEEN CHANGED BY THE ENTRANCING, EVER-YOUTHFUL JULIE. BUT SHE GRADUALLY BECAME LOVELY, ALONE ON THE HUGE ESTATE.

DARLING!

YES, DEAR!



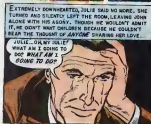
DARLING... BELIEVE ME, I'M *VERY* HAPPY, BUT... I'M *ALONE* SO MUCH. YOU'RE IN THE CITY ALL DAY, AND I NEVER SEE OR SPEAK TO ANYONE. I'M NOT COMPLAINING, *HONEST!* IT'S JUST THAT... WELL, I GET LONESOME SOMETIMES!

I... I KNOW, JULIE! BUT... WELL, WHAT CAN I DO?



I DON'T MIND NEVER LEAVING THE ESTATE. BUT I THOUGHT... MAYBE IF I HAD SOMETHING TO... TO KEEP ME *JUST* LIKE, *JUST* A *BABY*?

WHAT? A *BABY*? NO! NO, I... I DON'T WANT TO HAVE ANY CHILDREN! IT... IT WOULD *SPOIL* YOU FOR ME!



HE WAITED UNTIL SHE RETURNED,
FOURS LATER, FROM THE WOODS...

SHE'S BEEN MEETING FARNSWORTH!
SHE'S FALLEN FOR HIM BECAUSE HE
LIKES CHILDREN! IT HAD TO BE
HIM! SHE DOESN'T KNOW ANY
OTHER MEN!



DAYS LATER, AT JOHN'S OFFICE...

OH, HELLO, MR. FARNSWORTH? WHY
CERTAINLY! WE'D BE GLAD TO
HAVE YOU FOR DINNER TONIGHT!
ABOUT EIGHT O'CLOCK? FINE!



BUT EARLY THAT EVENING, WHILE
MR. FARNSWORTH WAS FINISHING
SOME WORK BEFORE VISITING JOHN'S
HOME...

WHE... WHO'S
THERE?!



IN A FURIOUS ASSAULT, JOHN POUNDED AND BATTERED
MR. FARNSWORTH UNTIL HIS HAVING JEALOUSY HAD SPENT,
AND THE SLIDER MAN LAY UNMOVING ON THE FLOOR...

THERE! THAT'LL TEACH
YOU TO TAKE ADVANTAGE
OF MY WIFE!



LATER THAT NIGHT, BOTH HE AND JULIE FACED THE
FLOOR, BUT FOR VERY DIFFERENT REASONS...

BUT IT'S ALMOST
NINE-THIRTY, JOHN!
MR. FARNSWORTH
HAS NEVER BEEN
THIS LATE!

WHAT SHE'S
WORKING! JUST
WELL TELL SHE
SHE'S TENDRONE
HEADLINES!

YOU'RE RIGHT,
JULIE! I GUESS
HE COULDN'T
MAKE IT! LET'S
GET SOME SLEEP!



THE NEXT MORNING, JOHN HENDRICKS READ THE HEAD-
LINES, THEN HANDED THE PAPER TO HIS WIFE. HE NOTICED
HER FACE CLOGLY FOR ANY TELL-TALE EXPRESSION...

OH, GOOD HEAVENS, JOHN! IT SAYS
HERE THAT MR. FARNSWORTH WAS
MURDERED BY A BROWLAP LAST
NIGHT! ISN'T THAT AWFUL?



HE WAS SUCH A GOOD CLIENT
OF YOURS! IT WOULD BE A
SHAME IF THIS HURTS YOUR
BUSINESS IN ANY WAY! TSK!
SUCH A NICE OLD MAN!

OH, YES! YES...



THOUGH DISAPPOINTED WHEN HIS WIFE SHOWED NO SIGN OF DEEP GRIEF BECAUSE OF MR. FARNSWORTH'S DEATH, HE WAS ALSO PUZZLED BY HER CALM ACCEPTANCE OF IT UNTIL THE FOLLOWING SATURDAY...



WHA! GOOD HEAVENS!
JULIE'S GONE OFF INTO
THE WOODS AGAIN!

FRANTICALLY, HE
RACED OUT OF
THE HOUSE INTO
THE WOODS... BUT
SHE WAS NOWHERE
IN SIGHT...



...NO USE TRYING
TO FIND HER NOW!
I'LL WAIT UNTIL NEXT
SATURDAY!

HE RETURNED TO THE HOUSE, THE
TEARS OF ANGER ROLLING DOWN
HIS CHEEKS...

I... I DON'T UNDERSTAND! IF SHE'S
STILL MEETING SOME MAN, THEN...
THEN MAYBE SHE NEVER MET
FARNSWORTH AT ALL! DID
I KILL THE WRONG MAN?



...JULIE, I'LL NEVER LET ANYONE
ELSE HAVE YOU! I CAN'T BEAR
THE THOUGHT OF ANOTHER MAN
BEING NEAR YOU! I'LL KILL
HIM, JULIE! I'LL FIND HIM...
AND KILL HIM! I SWEAR IT!



AS USUAL, THE FOLLOWING WEEK,
JULIE DISAPPEARED INTO THE TREES,
WITH HER SMALL BASKET... BUT THIS
TIME JOHN WAS TRAILING CLOSE
BEHIND HER, AN UGLY GUN IN HIS
POCKET...



SHE RAN LIGHTLY IN AND OUT AMONG THE TREES AND
HE KEPT HER IN SIGHT ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY! HE
KEPT TRYING TO MAKE HIMSELF BELIEVE THAT HE WAS
ALL WRONG... THAT IT WAS HIS INSANE JEALOUSY
THAT CAUSED HIM TO THINK SUCH FILTHY THINGS ABOUT
HIS PREVIOUS JULIE...



...BUT HE KNEW HE HAD BEEN RIGHT WHEN HE SAW
HER REACH THE CREST OF A SMALL HILL... SHE STOOD
MOTIONLESS FOR A MOMENT, THEN HAPPILY RAISED HER
ARM, WAVING AND CALLING A GREETING TO THE SOME-
ONE OUT OF SIGHT BEYOND THE HILL...



THROUGH A STREAM OF TEARS, HE SAW HER BEGIN TO REMOVE HER BLOUSE AS SHE DISAPPEARED DOWN THE OTHER SIDE OF THE HILL, TOWARD HER COMPANION! HE SLUMPED TO THE GROUND NEARLY...



A LONG TIME LATER, HE SAW HER REAPPEAR AT THE HILL CREST, RADIANT AND SMILING, AND BUTTONGING HER BLOUSE! SHE WAVED GOOD-BYE, BLEW A KISS FROM DAUNT'S FINGERTIPS AND HURRIED BACK TOWARD THE HOUSE, HER LITTLE BASKET SWINGING GAILY IN THE SUN. JOHN PICKED THE GUN UP FROM THE GROUND...



HE SAT THERE, SORROWING QUIETLY, LISTENING TO HER EVERLASTING LAUGHTER FLOAT UP OVER THE HILL, WHILE NOCTURNAL VISIONS OF WHAT WAS TAKING PLACE RACED THROUGH HIS MIND! THE LAUGHTER DIED, TO BE REPLACED BY INTERMINABLE DUST, BROKEN ONLY BY AN OCCASIONAL GIGGLE... A SOLID OF JOY...



THERE WERE NO TEARS NOW... ONLY HATRED! DEEP, VENOMOUS, MANICURAL HATRED! WITH THE SUN CRIPPLED TENTLY, HE CREEPT STEALTHILY TO THE TOP OF THE HILL...



HE CAUGHT A MOVEMENT BEHIND A CLUMP OF BUSHES! THROUGH THE LEAVES HE SAW THE COLOR OF FLESH AND HE AIMED THE GUN AND FIRED... AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN!



HE RAN HYSTERICALLY FROM THE HILL, BACK THROUGH THE TREES TO THE HOUSE! IT WAS OVER! JULIE WAS HIS AGAIN!



HE WAS EXHAUSTED AS HE REACHED THE HOUSE AND SAW JULIE...

OH, THERE YOU ARE! I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR YOU! PLEASE, DEAR, WALK WITH ME!
I... I HAVE... I HAVE SOMETHING TO TELL YOU!

END WARR...



SHELED HIM BACK INTO THE WOODS. HE HESITATED AT FIRST, THEN WENT WITH HER! WHY NOT? HE HAD NOTHING TO FEAR...

I... I WANT TO CONFESS SOMETHING, JOAN!
I KNOW I SHOULDN'T HAVE DONE IT BEHIND YOUR BACK... BUT, WELL... I COULDN'T HELP IT!
YOU KNOW HOW LONELY I WAS!

A CONFESSION. FAT LOT OF GOOD IT WILL DO HER. LONELY? JUST AS WELL IF THEY *DID* STUMBLE ON HIS BODY... JULIE WOULD BE A GOOD WITNESS.

IT... IT JUST HAPPENED! I WENT SWIMMING BY THE POND ONE DAY, AND THERE HE WAS! I LIKED HIM RIGHT AWAY! HE WAS SO CUTE... JULIE HAD BLUE EYES! YOU... YOU UNDERSTAND, DON'T YOU, JOAN?

MAYBE, IF HE HAD TO...

YOU KNOW HOW LONELY I WAS!
I WANTED SOMEONE... ANYONE!
IT WAS WRONG... BUT HE STARTED TO MEET EVERY SUNDAY...

...HE COULD EVEN PUT THE BLAME...

I DIDN'T EVEN TO DO IT BEHIND YOUR BACK... BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY! I KNOW NOW... HOW JEALOUS YOU ARE!

...ON JULIE? WHAT A LIE!

BUT I CAN'T KEEP IT FROM YOU ANY LONGER! YOU'RE A *WOMAN* TO KNOW! HE'S SO WONDERFUL! I WANT YOU TO MEET HIM!

ME AND I HAVE HAD SUCH FUN, PISCICORAN AND SWIMMING TOGETHER! HIS NAME IS TOMMY!
HE'S FROM THE SHIPMAN HOME BEHIND YOUR ESTATE! I KNOW YOU'LL JUST LOVE HIM! AND... HE'S JUST *STARTED* TO MEET YOU!

THE
END

in gratitude...

IT WAS AS IF A HUGE BLANKET HAD SUDDENLY FALLEN UPON THE CROWD THAT JAMMED THE STATION PLATFORM, MUSHING THEIR CLAMORING VOICES, SUPPLING THEIR LAUGHTER. ALL EYES TURNED TO WHERE THE SHINING RAILS HAD RUN AWAY TOWARD THE HORIZON AND DISAPPEARED INTO THE MIST AT THE FOOTHILLS OF THE DISTANT MOUNTAINS. ALL EARS LISTENED TO THE FAINT WHISTLE OF THE APPROACHING TRAIN. AND THEN, IT WAS AS IF THE BLANKET WERE SUDDENLY LIFTED AGAIN... A BANG BEGAN TO PLAY. THE SHOUTING AND LAUGHTER EXPLODED AGAIN... LOWER THIS TIME...

MARCIA AND ANDREW NOBLE, THE PARENTS, STOOD AMID THE CHEERING SHOUTING CROWD. THERE WERE TEARS OF JOY IN MRS. NOBLE'S EYES, AND MR. NOBLE'S FACE BEAMED...

HE'S COME HOME, ANDREW. OUR JOEY'S COME HOME... A HERO!

THE WHOLE TOWN'S PROUD OF HIM, MARCIA! THE WHOLE TOWN! LOOK AT 'EM...

HERE HE COMES! RIGHT ON TIME, TOO!

LET'S GIVE HIM THE BEST BARN WELCOMING THIS TOWN EVER HAD!

LET'S START ABOUT THESE PLANK FOLKS! LET'S REALLY PUT ON A SHOW FOR HIM!

WELCOME

THE TRAIN HURLED AND SHRIEKED AS IT STEAMED INTO THE STATION AND SCREELED TO A STOP. THE CROWD YELLED AND HOWLED AND FISHED. THE BANG BLAZED. SOMEBODY POINTED... SHOUTING...

THERE HE IS!

WELCOME HOME, JOEY!

JOEY!

MA PAPA!

THE BOY SPRANG OFF THE TRAIN AND PUT OUT HIS ARMS AND HIS MOTHER RUSHED INTO THEM AND HE HELD HER CLOSE.



THE MAYOR PUT UP HIS HANDS AND THE BAND STOPPED PLAYING. THE CROWD SILENT.



THE BOY SMILED, WAVED TO THE CROWD, AND PICKED UP HIS BARRACLOUGH BAG. THE CROWD PARTED AND HE MOVED TO THE WAITING CAR FLANKED BY HIS BEAMING PARENTS.



HIS FATHER STOOD BY, BLANKETING, WAITING AS THE MOTHER KISSED AND KISSED HER RETURNED HERO SON, AND THEN



THE FATHER HELD OUT HIS RIGHT HAND. THE BOY RESPONDED AUTOMATICALLY... THEN HE STOPPED. THE FATHER STARED AT THE BEAMING METAL CLAMP...



THE CROWD CHIERED. THE MAYOR HELD UP HIS HAND AGAIN.



THE CAR DOOR SLAMMED. THE BAND BEGAN TO PLAY AGAIN, AND THE CROWD ROARED AS THEIR RETURNED HERO WAS WAVED OFF.



MRS. MORRIS PUTTERED HAPPILY OVER THE KITCHEN STOVE, CHATTERING GAILY AND WIPING AWAY AN OCCASIONAL TEAR OF JOY...

I MADE EVERYTHING YOU LIKE, JOEY! ROAST BEEF... FRENCH FRIES... BROCCOLI... APPLE PIE WITH ICE CREAM.

SOUNDS GREAT, MA!



THE PARENTS SAT QUIETLY, PICKING AT THEIR FOOD, WATCHING JOEY FEAST RAVENOUSLY, MARVELING AT THE WAY HE MANIPULATED HIS FORK WITH THE SHINY CLAMP...

GOES... DOES IT HURT MUCH, JOEY?

WHAT, MA? OH? THIRST HAN? I'M USED TO IT NOW. IN THE BEGINNING IT WAS TOUGH... BUT NOW...



THE BOY PUT DOWN HIS FORK ON THE EMPTY PLATE BEFORE HIM AND SAT BACK, SATES. HE LOOKED AROUND, GRINNING... DRINKING IN THE FAMILIAR SCENE... THE FAMILIAR SMELLS...

IT'S GOOD TO BE HOME AGAIN, MA, PA!

IT'S GOOD TO HAVE YOU HOME AGAIN, JOEY!



HE LOOKED AT HIS WATCH...

IT'S TWO-FIFTEEN. WE HAVE PLENTY OF TIME TILL THE RALLY. I... I THINK IT'S LIKE TO GO OUT TO HARRY'S GRAVE FIRST!

HARRY'S GRAVE?



THE PARENTS PALED. THE SON LOOKED AT THEM...

THAT'S RIGHT, MA! I'D KINDA LIKE TO STOP BY AND SEE IT BEFORE WE GO ON TO THE RALLY, YOU KNOW...

WH... SURE, SON! SURE!



THE SON STOOD UP...

WHAT'S WRONG, MA... PA? HARRY'S BOTHERING YOU?

N-NO-THIN' JOEY!

IT'S... IT'S JUST...



THE MOTHER TOOK HER SON'S HAND...

WE MEANT TO WRITE YOU ABOUT IT, JOEY! WE MEANT TO TELL YOU! BUT WE - WE JUST COULDN'T BRING OURSELVES TO DO IT!

SIT DOWN, JOEY! YOU MIGHT AS WELL KNOW IT... NOW.



THE HERO SAT DOWN. HE LOOKED UP AT HIS PARENTS STANDING OVER HIM...



WHAT HAPPENED, PAT? COULDN'T YOU SWING IT? DIDN'T HIS BODY GET HERE?

IT ISN'T THAT, DAD! IT'S...

THE FATHER'S VOICE WAVERED. THE MOTHER TOOK UP THE STORY...



ALL THOSE LETTERS YOU WROTE, JOEY? YOU NEVER MENTIONED IT! IT WASN'T FAIR! WE GREW TO LOVE HANK FROM YOUR LETTERS!

HE WAS MY BUDDY, MA! I LOVED HIM LIKE A BROTHER. HE WENT THROUGH IT ALL SIDE BY SIDE...

THE FATHER BEGAN AGAIN...



WE KNOW SON, BUT...

WE PICTURED HIM SO DIFFERENT, JOEY! WHEN YOU TALKED ABOUT HIM WE PICTURED HIM... WELL...

'WHEN YOU WROTE ABOUT THAT PATROL YOU WERE SENT ON, WE COULD JUST SEE YOU BOTH... TRAMPING THROUGH THE MUD TOGETHER...'



WHAT THE...?

HIT THE DIRT?

ENEMY MACHINE GUN!

'AND WHEN THE ENEMY MACHINE-GUN CUT YOUR PATROL OFF... PINNED IT DOWN, WE COULD JUST PICTURE YOU TWO HANK VOLUNTEERING TO PUT IT OUT OF COMMISSION... AND CHAWING OFF...'



KEEP YOUR HEADS DOWN, FELLERS.

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF 'EM, LIEUTENANT!

WE RIGHT BACK, LIEUTENANT!

'WE WERE SO PROUD OF YOU BOTH, JOEY... FORGIVING THOSE GRENADES... GILENCING THAT GUN...'



THAT DID IT, HANK!

LOOK OUT, JOEY!

'AND WHEN THE LIVE GRENADE LANDED BESIDE YOU AND HANK... LEANED UPON IT... COVERING IT WITH HIS BODY... SAVING YOUR LIFE...'



THE MOTHER HUNG HER HEAD...

WE GRIEVED WHEN WE HEARD ABOUT IT, JOEY! WE CRIED!

NOT BECAUSE YOU LOST YOUR ARM, JOEY! WE CRIED BECAUSE HANK GAVE HIS LIFE TO SAVE YOURS!

...AND WHEN YOU WROTE HOME THAT HANK HAD NO FAMILY AND ASKED THAT WE SEND FOR HIS BODY SO HE COULD BE BURIED IN OUR FAMILY PLOT AT FAIRLAWN...

...WE DID IT, JOEY! HAPPILY!

WE EVEN ARRANGED TO HAVE HIS BODY TRANSFERRED FROM THE SIMPLE WOODEN COFFIN THE GOVERNMENT SUPPLIED...

WE BOUGHT A REAL NICE CASSET, JOEY! EVERYTHING WAS SET...



ONLY THE NIGHT BEFORE HANK'S FUNERAL, THE UNDERTAKER CALLED... AND TOLD US!

WE...WE DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!

AND BY MORNING THE WHOLE TOWN HAD HEARD...

THE PHONE DIDN'T STOP RINGING...



THE SOLDIER-HERO SAT THERE... STUNNED... LISTENING...

WE COULDN'T GO THROUGH WITH IT, JOEY! THE WHOLE TOWN WAS ON OUR NECKS, OUR FRIENDS... THE FAMILY...

I HAD MY BUSINESS TO CONSIDER, SON. WE COULDN'T DO IT!



HE LOOKED UP... WHISPERING HOBBLELY...

THEN... WHAT DID YOU DO?

WHY...WE... WE BURIED HIM OVER IN GREENDALE...

HE'S GOT A HUGE PLOT, JOEY! PA BOUGHT HIM THE BEST. MORE THAN WE COULD AFFORD!





THE GATHERED CROWD THAT HAD COME TO HONOR JOEY - ROSE TO ITS FEET, APPLAUDING. JOEY STOOD BEFORE IT, HIS HEAD BOWED.

FINALLY, THE AUDITORIUM QUIETED DOWN, THEIR SOLDIER HERO BEGAN TO SPEAK. HIS VOICE WAS SCARCELY AUDIBLE.



HE LOOKED DOWN AT THESE, HIS TOWNSMEN...

HE HELD UP HIS ARM WITH THE STEEL CLAMP...

THEY TRAINED ME AND SENT ME TO KOREA. THEY SAID I WAS FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY, HELPING TO PUSH BACK THE TIDE OF SLAVERY THAT THREATENED TO OVERRUN EUROPE AND ASIA... THE WORLD.

I SAVED MY RIGHT HAND DEFENDING FREEDOM AND EQUALITY, AND I WAS PROUD OF IT.



HIS VOICE LOWERED. HIS
FACE GREW GRIM...

I WAS PROUD THAT IS,
UNTIL TODAY...



HE LOOKED FROM FACE TO FACE...

I HAD A BUDDY IN KOREA. WE ATE
TOGETHER...SLEPT TOGETHER...
LAUGHED TOGETHER...CRIED TOGETHER...
WE FOUGHT TOGETHER. WE FOUGHT
FOR DEMOCRACY TOGETHER...



HE SAVED HIS LIFE FOR THAT
CAUSE... AND HE SAVED MINE IN
DOING IT. HE THREW HIMSELF
ON A LIVE GRENADE... GOT
BLOWN UP... TO SAVE ME...



BUT WHEN HIS BODY WAS SENT
BACK HOME, IT WASN'T GOOD
ENOUGH TO BE BURIED IN FAIR-
LAWN CEMETERY. IT WASN'T
GOOD ENOUGH BECAUSE ITS
SKIN WASN'T THE RIGHT
COLOR...



WELL, THE GRENADE THAT
TOOK THAT SKIN TO PIECES
DIDN'T KNOW ITS COLOR...
DIDN'T CARE IF IT WAS
WHITE OR BLACK



WHAT DID HE DIE FOR? WHAT DID
I LIVE MY ARM FOR? YOU SAY
YOU'RE PROUD OF ME. WELL,
I'M NOT PROUD OF YOU, I'M
ASHAMED! I'M ASHAMED OF
YOU... AND FOR YOU!



THE SOLDIER-HERO SAT DOWN... THERE WAS NO
APPLAUSE... NO CHEERS... NO BAND PLAYING. LITTLE
BY LITTLE, THE CROWD FILED OUT OF THE AUDITORIUM...
SHEETLY... SILENTLY...



... LEAVING THE SOLDIER-HERO ALONE IN THE EMPTY
TOWN HALL. LEAVING HIM CRYING...



THE
END

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THESE SEALS
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DEADBEAT!



Dr. Curtis Clark drew his bathrobe tighter around his ample stomach and snorted angrily: "How long does your worthless brother intend to stay here and sponge off us?"

"N-Now, Curt," his wife mumbled from the big bed, "I'll see that Burt doesn't get in your way while he's here. If you'd only try to make allowances for him. He's so proud that you're one of the country's most eminent botanists..."

"Pffft!" rasped Dr. Clark. "He's nothing but a worthless bum who's never done a day's work in his life! Only reason he's visiting is to satisfy that bottomless pit he calls his stomach!"

.....

Burt Devine tiptoed silently down the stairs and into the kitchen. With great care he flipped the light switch and moved across the room. An audible grunt came from him as he stopped in his tracks: that pompous brother-in-law of his had put a padlock on the refrigerator! What was a guy supposed to do when he hankered for a midnight snack? Burt moved toward the pantry and his hand closed around the doorknob. That crummy Clark, he thought to himself with disgust... he's even locked up the pantry! Not a speck of food around, and I'm starving to death after that stingy little snack they call dinner at this dump!

A thought struck Burt Devine and, switching off the kitchen light, he

walked silently toward the rear of the house . . . to the glassed-in porch where Clark did his at-home experimenting. In the greenhouse, Burt reflected, he might find some tidbits left behind by his sister's cheap husband.

The door opened quietly and Burt stepped into the workroom: a quick search revealed nothing to eat. About to exit in disgust, Burt saw a wooden box set on a worktable. Closer examination brought a smile to his heavy face: his eyes lit up, his mouth gaped in a grin, the corners of his eyes crinkled with good humor. Digging his hands deep into the soil, he pulled up a fistful of the objects planted there.

"This is better than I hoped for," Burt rejoiced. "Just what I need to satisfy my craving for a late snack: MUSHROOMS! If there's anything I adore, it's a feast of luscious, tender, succulent mushrooms! Yum!"

And, sulking actions to word, Burt Devine proceeded to clean out the box. In a few minutes, smacking his lips with obvious delight, he closed the greenhouse door and tiptoed upstairs to his bedroom. What a laugh on stuffy old Clark!

Dr. Clark rose from the breakfast table. "First time in memory," he said, "that your brother missed a meal!" With that he strode toward the greenhouse, while his wife tidied up the kitchen. Within a minute Clark was back, his face crimson. "T-That special strain of TOADSTOOLS I've been working on," he spluttered, "t-they're all gone! Must've been dug up last night! I-I hope the dog didn't get in and eat them! Those toadstools are highly poisonous! One mouthful and . . . brrrr! I hate to think of the agony that will precede death within two hours of the time they're eaten!



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SHOCK TALK

The only shocking thing about this column is that it's probably no shock! You've no doubt seen it two or three times in previous E.C. issues. But if ya haven't yet heard about E.C.'s new fan club, why read on!

Before launching into the sordid details of the club, however, we would like to sketch in a little background. We started out with two conditions that positively had to be met:

1) Our club would have to be a different kind of fan club... a continuously active club that would provide long-range interest, enjoyment and benefits for its members! And...

2) Our club would have to be a non-profit fan club! Incredible as it may seem, the only income we at E.C. derive... or hope to derive... from our efforts comes from the newsstand sales of our 18c mags. We actually lose a little on subscriptions, and make very little on the annuals... both are primarily offered as services to promote good will! If you readers want a fan club, we're more than happy to oblige... but, again, as a service, not for profit!

So here's what we've come up with:

1) **THE NAME:** As one reader wrote a while back, "E.C. magazines are habit-forming." So what could be more logical than to call the organization, "THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB"?

2) **THE SET-UP:** The E.C. Fan-Addict Club will consist of the national "parent" organization, and local chapters. Everyone who joins will be a member of the national organization. In addition, any group of five or more prospective members may join as an authorized chapter of the national organization. Each such chapter will be assigned a charter number. The name and address of the elected president of each authorized chapter will be made available to all members, so that those who are not already a member of a chapter will be able to join the one nearest them if they wish to.

3) **WHAT YOU GET:** Each member will receive a full-color 7x9 by 10 1/2" membership certificate, suitable for framing; a wallet-size membership identification card; a striking membership patch for sweaters, jackets, etc.,

and a very distinguished-looking membership pin!

4) **COST OF JOINING:** Membership in THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB will set you back two bits... 25c! This 25c represents the exact cost to us (plus or minus a fraction of a cent!) of one envelope, one stamp, and the above mentioned four items... certificate, card, patch, and pin! (The cost of Ruby's and Nancy's loving labor in packing and mailing is lovingly donated by E.C.)

5) **POSSIBLE FUTURE PLANS:** We are considering publishing an E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB BULLETIN, containing such features of national and local chapter news; advance inside information on new titles, future stories, and special issues, etc.; articles and stories submitted by members, and a "back-issue trading post." Only club members would be eligible to subscribe, with the price and frequency of publication yet to be decided upon.

We are also considering some sort of "E.C. Surprise-of-the-Month" plan for members. What the surprises might be, and what we might have to clip you for THIS one, is also as yet undetermined.

6) **IF YOU'RE STILL INTERESTED:** For an individual membership, send 25c, along with your clearly printed name and address, to:

THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB
Room 706
215 Lafayette Street
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

If five or more of you wish to join as an authorized chapter, enclose each member's name and address, along with 25c for each name, and indicate the name of the elected president. We will notify each president of his chapter's charter number... but each chapter member will receive his membership credentials, etc., individually.

So that's it! Meet new friends. Make new enemies. See the world. Spend money. Join THE E.C. FAN-ADDICT CLUB!

(In honor of the occasion, we will forgo the usual subscription plug that 6 issues of this, or any other E.C. mag, cost 75c—ed.)

The SPACE SUITORS

IT WAS ALMOST TIME. WANDA TURNED AND LOOKED BACK ACROSS THE DESOLATE PEBBLED PLATEAU TO WHERE THE SHIP STOOD, TALL AND SILENT AND SILVER... A MONUMENT TO LIFE IN A DEAD ATMOSPHERELESS WORLD. THEN SHE LOOKED DOWN AT MILTON, HER WEALTHY MIDDLE-AGED HUSBAND, CHEELING AWKWARDLY BEFORE HER IN HIS HEAVY RUBBER-RIBBED SPACE-SUIT, STUDYING THE SAMPLE OF PLANETOID ROCK. GOLD MILTON, AS EMPTY AND BARRER AS THIS WORLD THEY'D TRAVELED ACROSS THE VOID OF ENDLESS SPACE TO EXPLORE, AND THEN SHE LOOKED AT DONALD, HER HUSBAND'S YOUNG AND HAND-SOME EMPLOYEE, STANDING BEHIND HER, BURNING ORNATELY... VIBRANT AND EXCITING, WITH WHOM SHE'D PLANNED ALL THIS... WITH WHOM SHE'D PLANNED GOLD MILTON'S DEATH.

WANDA STIFFENED. MILTON WAS SETTING UP SLOWLY. IT WAS ALMOST TIME NOW. HE'D LOOKED AT THE ONE SAMPLE AND NOW HE KNEW... HE KNEW DON HAD LIED TO HIM. YES, IT WAS ALMOST TIME TO KILL HIM...



WANDA SHIVERED. EVEN THOUGH HER SPACE-SUIT WAS WOVED WITH FINE WIRES THAT RELEASED THE POCKET OF AIR BETWEEN ITS RUBBED SURFACE AND HER SMOOTH WHITE BODY, SHE SHIVERED. MILT STARED AT THE GUN DON HELD IN HIS SLOWED FIST.



A SCIENCE-FICTION SUSPENSE STORY

MILT LAUGHED. HIS LAUGHTER RASPED OVER THE INTERCOM, RINGING OUT OF THE TINY SPEAKER IN WANDA'S SPACE-HELMET...



WHAT'S SO FUNNY, MILT?

YOU TWO? YOU'VE BEEN SO CLEVER! WELL, I'VE BEEN CLEVERER!

WANDA SCREAMED...



WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR, DON? DON'T LISTEN TO HIM! HE'S TRYING TO STALL US! PULL THE TRIGGER...

YES, DON! PULL THE TRIGGER! KILL ME! SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

WANDA MOVED FORWARD, HATE BURNING IN HER EYES. SHE LEEPED AT HER HUSBAND...



I'LL TELL YOU WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN, MILTON! AFTER YOU'RE DEAD, DON AND I ARE GOING BACK TO THE SHIP AND WE'RE GOING TO TAKE OFF OUR SUITS AND HE'S GOING TO TAKE ME IN HIS ARMS AND...

DON'T YOU THINK I KNEW THIS, WANDA? DON'T YOU THINK I KNEW ABOUT YOU AND DON?



NO, MILTON. IF YOU KNEW, YOU WOULDN'T HAVE COME! YOU WOULDN'T HAVE WALKED INTO THIS TRAP!

YOU'RE WRONG, WANDA. I KNEW I WAS GOING TO LOSE YOU! I KNEW IF THAT DON COME TO ME FOR ME AND I SAW THAT NUMBER IN YOUR EYES...

WANDA STARED AT MILTON. HER THOUGHTS WENT RACING WILDLY... BACK ACROSS THOSE TORTUROUS MONTHS... BACK ACROSS THOSE MONTHS OF LONGING AND FRUSTRATION... BACK TO THE BEGINNING...



WANDA... THIS IS DONALD CONRAD. DON IS A SPACE-EXPLORER. I'VE HIRED HIM TO DO SOME PROSPECTING FOR ME...

A PLEASURE, MR. CONRAD...

HAD SHE SEEN SO OBVIOUS? HAD MILTON ACTUALLY SEEN THE GLOW OF THE PASSION-FIRE THAT DON HAD STURRED WITHIN HER?... YES!



YOUR HUSBAND IS INTERESTED IN URANIUM, MR. GRIFFITH...

YES! I KNOW! IT'S HIS WHOLE LIFE. HE HARDLY HAS TIME FOR ANYTHING ELSE!

WANDA REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D THOUGHT ABOUT DON AFTER THAT, AND HOW THE FIRE WITHIN HER HAD LEAPED INTO A FLAMING INFERNO OF DESIRE...



IT WAS AICE OF YOU TO INVITE ME TO DANCE, WANDA!

MILT TOLD ME YOU WERE LEAVING TOMORROW, AND I THOUGHT WE'D GIVE YOU A NICE SEND-OFF...

SHE REMEMBERED THOSE STOLEN MOMENTS TOGETHER... OUT ON THE BALCONY... WHILE MILT WAS MIXING DRINKS...



PLEASE... TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, DON'T I WOULD'NT WANT TO LOSE YOU NOW THAT I'VE FOUND YOU...

BABY...

...THE THRILL OF THEIR FIRST KISS... THE TEMPTING ENTREE TO THE FEAST OF LOVE THAT WAS TO FOLLOW...



OH, DON'T! I'VE LOVED YOU SINCE THE FIRST MOMENT I SAW YOU... LOVED YOU... AND WANTED YOU! MUST YOU GO TOMORROW?

I'VE GOT TO! BUT WHEN I GET BACK WE'LL... COUGH... WATCH IT! HE'S COMING!

...THOSE INTERMINABLE MONTHS OF WAITING UNTIL DON CAME BACK... THE TORTURE OF CREATING HIM AT THE ROCKET PORT... WITH MILT.



WELCOME!

WELCOME BACK, DON! WELL PAY MY LOSE!

...THE PAIN OF BEING SO NEAR HIM AND NOT BEING ABLE TO THROW HIMSELF INTO HIS ARMS...

I FOUND A ROMANCE, MILT! A PLANETOID LOADED WITH URANIUM- BEARING ORE...

GREAT! GREAT!



...THE WHISPERS OF LOVE...

I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU, DARLING! TOMORROW, MILT WON'T BE HOME. COME UP ABOUT ELEVEN...

I'VE GOT A BETTER PLAN, WANDA. TRUST ME...



...LISTENING ALL THAT EVENING TO DON AND MILT TALKING BUSINESS... NUMBERING... LONGING FOR THIS MAN...



...IT'S A LITTLE ATMOSPHERELESS PLANETOID OUTSIDE OF SOLAR SYSTEM X-5-B. OF COURSE, WE'LL HAVE TO WEAR SPACE-SUITS...

I'LL MAKE ARRANGEMENTS TO GO WITH YOU AND TAKE A LOOK...

...AND THEN, FINALLY, THAT SWEET MOMENT ALONE... THAT ONE OPPORTUNITY...



SWEETHEART! I'VE THOUGHT ABOUT YOU EVERY MINUTE THAT YOU WERE AWAY... WANTED YOU... DREAMED OF IT...

LISTEN! WE DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME! I'VE GOT A PLAN...

WANDA REMEMBERED HOW DON'D OUTLINED HIS PLAN...

NO ONE WILL SUSPECT FOUL PLAY YET! THERE IS NO MOTIVE! NO ONE KNOWS ABOUT US!

BUT DON'T THAT MEANS WE'VE GOT TO BE SO CAREFUL!

EXACTLY! THAT'S WHY I CAN'T COME UP TOMORROW WHEN MIL'S AWAY! WE'VE GOT TO WAIT! HAH! WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE CHANCES!

WHY... DON'T WE'VE WAITED ALL THESE MONTHS... WHILE YOU WERE GONE.

WE CAN'T WAIT JUST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER, WANDA, HONEY! JUST A LITTLE WHILE LONGER...

HOLD ME... KISS ME...



HAD MILTON REALLY KNOWN? HAD HE SUSPECTED? WANDA COULDN'T BELIEVE IT! THEY'D BEEN SO CAREFUL! ASIDE FROM THOSE BRIEF STOLEN RECORDS ALONE, THEY'D BEHAVED LIKE STRANGERS.

WANDA! I HAVE AN EXCELLENT IDEA! WHY DON'T YOU COME ALONG WITH ME WHEN I GO TO EXAMINE DON'S DISCOVERY?

GO ALONG, MILT? WHY, WHY, WOULDN'T I BE IN THE WAY?



HAD MILTON HAD AN ULTIMATE MOTIVE IN INVITING WANDA ON THE TRIP? HAD HE FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR PLAN TO KILL HIM?

WHY DID YOU DO THAT? WHY DID YOU SAY 'YES' TO MY COMING ALONG?

IT'S A LONG TRIP HOME, BABY! A LONG TRIP...



NONSENSE! WANDA WOULDN'T BE IN THE WAY, WOULD SHE, COMRADE?

OF COURSE NOT! MILT YOU COME ALONG, MRS. GREYHILL, YOU'LL ENJOY THE TRIP, I'M SURE!



WANDA REMEMBERED THE EXCITEMENT... THE ANTICIPATION! NOT OF THE TRIP TO THE PLANETOID THAT WOULD BE SURE TORTURE! BUT THE TRIP HOME WITH MILT DEAD... AND SHE AND DON... TOGETHER!

OF COURSE, IF YOU'D RATHER NOT GO, WANDA.

DON'T BE SILLY, MILT I WANT TO GO!



MILTON'S LAUGH, ECHOING INSIDE WANDA'S SPACE-HELMET, SHOOKED HER OUT OF HER REVERIE...SHOOKED HER BACK TO THE BARREN ROCKY PLANETOID...

YES, WANDA. I KNEW I LOST YOU. THAT'S WHY I CAME! I WANTED TO DIE. THERE WAS NOTHING LEFT FOR ME WITHOUT YOU...



AND YOU'RE WRONG, WANDA? AFTER I'M DEAD, YOU'RE NOT GOING BACK TO THE SHIP. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO GET WHAT YOU WANT. THAT'S NOT WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN AT ALL.



MILT POINTED TO A SWITCH ON HIS SPACE-SLUT BELT-RADIO.

IF I PRESS THIS TOSSIE, THE SHIP'S AUTOMATIC PILOT WILL TAKE IT OFF...AND YOU'LL BE LEFT...STRANDED HERE... BOTH OF YOU...



...AND THERE ISN'T ANY ATMOSPHERE ON THIS PLANETOID...SO THERE ISN'T ANY AIR PRESSURE?



MILT GRINNED...

SO GO AHEAD, DON! PULL THE TRIGGER! KILL ME! SEE WHAT HAPPENS!

HE'S LYING, DON! HOW COULD HE HAVE KNOWN? HE'S TRYING TO OUTSMART US!

I DON'T KNOW, BABY...



DON...DON, BALLING? THINK OF THAT TRIP HOME! THINK OF HOW LONG WE'VE WAITED! THINK OF THE FUTURE WE'VE BOTH SUFFERED...WANTING EACH OTHER AND NOT BEING ABLE TO...

OKAY, BABY! OKAY! STAND ASIDE...



DON RAISED HIS GUN. HIS GLOVED FIST TIGHTENED. THERE WAS A SHARP CLICK AS HE PULLED THE TRIGGER...



MILT PITCHED FORWARD, THE AIR HISsing FROM HIS REHT SPACE-SUIT, POUNDING HIS BLOOD ACROSS THE ROCKY PLANETOID SURFACE.



AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE DIS-TANT SHIP SHROODER... SPITTING FLAME...



...AND SHOT SKYWARD...UP INTO THE BLACK STAR-STUDDED VOID...



FOR A LONG WHILE, THE MAN AND THE WOMAN JUST STOOD THERE, STARING AFTER THE FADING MIDDLE OF FIRE.



AND THEN THEY LOOKED AT EACH OTHER HUNGERING, AND KNEW THAT WHAT THEY'D KILLED FOR WAS NOW IMPOSSIBLE... THAT THEY WERE CONFINED TO THEIR SUITS... THAT IF THEY TRIED TO REMOVE THEM, THEIR BODIES WOULD BLOAT AND BLISTER AND THEIR BLOOD VESSELS WOULD RUPTURE... THAT THEY COULDN'T EVEN KISS, NO LESS.



THEN THEY LOOKED AT THE BODY LYING ON THE PE- BLES WITH THE BLOATED RUPTURED FACE THAT SEEMED TO SPIN BACK AT THEM...



AND WHEN THE OTHER SPACE EXPLORERS FINALLY CAME TO THE TINY FERRULED FLAMETED, THEY FOUND THE MAN AND THE WOMAN SITTING BESIDE EACH OTHER... DEAD FROM SUFFOCATION AND STARVATION... HOLDING BLOATED RUPTURED HANDS...



...THREE'S a CROWD

DELLA HAD BEEN ACTING *STRANGELY* LATELY... COLD TO MY ADVANCES. I *SENSED* SOMETHING WAS WRONG, BUT I JUST COULDN'T PUT MY FINGER ON IT. WHEN SHE'S SUGGESTED GOING UP TO THE *LOBBY* FOR THE WEEK-END, I'D JUMPED AT THE CHANCE. I'D FELT THAT THE *TWO* OF US, ALONE UP THERE, COULD *STRAIGHTEN OUT* WHATEVER HAD COME BETWEEN US. BUT THEN SHE'D DONE TO THE PHONE AND CALLED *ANDY* AND INVITED *HIM* UP, FOR...

YES, ANDY. *THIS WEEK-END*. JUST THE *THREE* OF US. YES. YOUR CAN'T WELL, IF YOU *INSIST* SOOO. SEE YOU *FRIDAY NIGHT*. THEN YOU'LL *PICK US UP*! FINE! BYE, DEARY!

DELLA, WHAT'S YOU SO AND DO *THAT* FOR?



DELLA HUNG UP AND TURNED TO ME INNOCENTLY...

OO WHOO, ALAN?

INVITE *ANDY* UP! I THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE NICE IF WE WENT UP TO THE LOBBY *ALONE*... JUST THE *TWO* OF US...



SHE LAUGHED...

AREN'T WE A LITTLE OLD FOR *THAT* KIND OF THING, ALAN? *MYGOD*, ANDY IS OUR *BEST FRIEND*. I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NICE TO HAVE HIM *ALONG*.

VERY *COZY!* AND WHAT'S THIS ABOUT *ANDY* *PICKING US UP*? YOU *KNOW* HOW DANGEROUS THOSE *ROADS* ARE. I *PREFER* TO DRIVE...



ANDY HAD A NEW CAR, ALAS, HE WANTS TO SHOW IT OFF. I COULDN'T VERY WELL REFUSE HIM.

NOT
NOT
VERY
WELL...

I GUESSED I ACTED PRETTY CHILDISH ABOUT THE WHOLE THING, BUT, GUESS FRANKLY, I WAS ANNOYED. OUR ANNIVERSARY WAS COMING UP THAT Sunday, AND IT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE PERFECT CHANCE TO CLEAR THE AIR OF WHATEVER IT WAS THAT WAS BOTHERING DELLA. BUT SHE'D SOWN AND INVITED ANDY, AND SPOILED THE WHOLE DEAL. FRIDAY NIGHT, ANDY PULLED UP IN HIS BRAND NEW CONVERTIBLE.

OH, ANDY! IT'S BEAUTIFUL!

Toss your bags in the back and hop in!

SWEET-LOOKING JOB, ANDY.

ALL THE WAY UP TO THE LODGE, ANDY RATTLED ON, PRAISING HIS NEW CAR. AND IT WAS A SWEET JOE! IT HAD POWER STEERING, POWER BRAKES, REMOTE-CONTROLLED WINDOWS THAT RAISED AND LOWERED AT THE TOUCH OF A BUTTON.

YES, SIR, SHE'S GOT EVERYTHING.

WHAT'S THAT, ANDY?

WHAT'S FINESTING?

WE'D ALMOST REACHED THE ROAD LEADING TO THE LODGE AS THE BELL STARTED TO RING. ANDY SMILED, LOOKING AT HIS WATCH.

I SAVED THIS FOR THE HOUR OF EMERGENCY! RIGHT ON TIME, TOO.

IT SOUNDS LIKE...

OH, NO!

ANDY REACHED UNDER THE DASH-BOARD AND LIFTED OUT THE RECEIVER.

YEP! A BUILT-IN-RADIO TELEPHONE. I LEFT ORDERS WITH MY SECRETARY TO CALL ME AT SEVEN. PARDON ME...

ANDY! YOU'RE CRAZY!

HELLO, HONEY! YES? ANY MESSAGES? OHAY, SEE YOU TOMORROW MORNING? BYE!

WELL, I'LL BE...

ANDY HUNG UP. HE GRINNED AT US.

ALWAYS WANTED ONE OF THOSE THINGS.

WATCH IT, ANDY! RIGHT AFTER THIS BRIDGE, THE ROAD SWEEPS UP A STEEP GRADE.

WE ZOOMED ACROSS THE BRIDGE AND THE CAR TOOK THE SHARP CURVE EASILY AND SPED UP THE STEEP MOUNTAIN ROAD.

YOU'LL HAVE TO **WATCH** THIS SPOT ON THE WAY **BACK**. ANDY, IT'S PRETTY **DANGEROUS**. YOU CAN'T SEE THE BRIDGE UNTIL YOU'RE **ALMOST ON TOP** OF IT!

ANDY, WHAT IN THE WORLD DO YOU NEED A **TELEPHONE** FOR?

YOU NEVER CAN **TELL**, DELLA. SOMEONE MIGHT WANT TO **REACH** ME...



ABOUT TEN MILES FURTHER ON, WE TURNED OFF THE MAIN HIGHWAY AND PULLED UP TO THE LODGE. ANDY WAS STILL BRAGGING ABOUT THE CAR-TELEPHONE.

I'LL GIVE YOU THE **NUMBER**, ALAN, SOON AS WE GET INSIDE. YOU WRITE IT DOWN...

FINE, ANDY! NOW, YOU AND DELLA GO ON IN AND I'LL GET YOUR **BAGS** OUT OF THE **TRUNK!**

NO!



DELLA TURNED WHITE. I LOOKED AT HER... THEN AT ANDY...

ER... MY BAGS ARE IN THE **BACK SEAT**, ALAN! THE **TRUNK** DOESN'T **OPEN** ITS... IT'S GOT THE **RADIO-TELEPHONE** CHARGES IN THERE.

OH? I SEE...



THE COLOR CAME BACK INTO DELLA'S CHEEKS AND SHE WENT ON INTO THE LODGE. I FELT A SUDDEN CHILL CREEP UP MY SPINE. HOW DID DELLA KNOW ABOUT THAT?

I'LL **HELP** YOU WITH THE BAGS, ALAN!

WENT ON... **SURE...**



DELLA AND I UNPACKED IN SILENCE. THAT **COLORLESS** SHE'D SHOWN TOWARDS ME LATELY... THOSE **REMEMBRANCES** OF MY **AWFUL** ADVANTAGE... COULD IT **BE**...

DELLA, I...

NOT NOW, ALAN! ANDY MUST BE **STARVED**. I'LL DO **SOMETHING** FOR US!



SHE HURRIED OFF TO THE KITCHEN, LEAVING ME WITH MY DOUBTS AND MY UNCERTAINTIES AND A ROILING TIDE OF MISTRUST AND SUSPICION. ANDY CAME IN AFTER A WHILE...

HERE'S MY **CAR-PHONE** **NUMBER**, ALAN. WHERE SHALL I **PUT** IT?

HOW? OH, JUST PUT IT DOWN ON THE **BURNER** THERE, ANDY!



AFTER SUPPER, WE SAT AROUND AND MADE IDLE CHATTER... AND THEN DELLA ANNOUNCED...

I THINK WE ALL OUGHT TO GET TO BED **EARLY** TONIGHT. TOMORROW, WE'LL GET THE BOAT OUT, AND SO COME **SAILING!**

GOOD IDEA! I'M **POORER** **TONIGHT**, YOU TWO!

GOOD NIGHT, ANDY!



AFTER WE GOT TO BED, BELLA REFUSED ME AGAIN, AND I FINALLY DROPPED OFF INTO A FRETFUL SLEEP. I DREAMED I SAW ANDY AND BELLA... KISSING.



I WAS AWAKENED WITH A START ABOUT THREE IN THE MORNING BY THE SLAMMING OF A CAR-TRUNK. I SAT UP. THE BED BESIDE ME WAS EMPTY. THEN, I HEARD WHISPERING VOICES OUTSIDE...



THAT'S BELLA'S VOICE... AND ANDY'S? THEY'RE OUT THERE... TOGETHER!

I SLIPPED INTO A ROBE AND TIP-TOED OUT OF THE LODGE, DOWN THE TRAIL, THE DOOR TO THE GUEST COTTAGE CLOSED. THE BLINDS WERE DRAWN, BUT THE LIGHTS WERE ON INSIDE.



I WAS RIGHT! THERE IS SOMETHING GOING ON BETWEEN THEM!

I MOVED TO THE GUEST COTTAGE SILENTLY... LISTENING. INSIDE, BELLA WAS LAUGHING SOFTLY, AND ANDY'S VOICE WAS WARM.

ALAN HAS NO IDEA, HAS HE... I MEAN... ABOUT WHAT WE'RE PLANNING?



NO! IT'LL BE A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO HIM WHEN HE FINDS OUT. DO YOU GET ME EVERYTHING I'LL MEET!

YET I BOUGHT EVERYTHING ON YOUR LIST. I SURE WAS EMBARRASSED BUYING THOSE DRESSES THOUGH.



WELL, I COULDN'T DO IT MYSELF! ALAN WOULD HAVE SUSPECTED THEM! OH, AND... WE'VE BOTH WANTED THIS SO BADLY... AND WE'VE WAITED SO LONG!

JEALOUSY AND HATE TORE AT MY HEART, RIPPED FEARS FROM MY EYES, AND SENT THEM SPILLING DOWN MY CHEEKS. ANDY AND BELLA... MY BEST FRIEND... AND MY WIFE. I COULDN'T SEE IN THROUGH THE SHADY WINDOWS, BUT I COULD JUST IMAGINE THEM IN EACH OTHER'S ARMS...

EVERY TIME HE'S TAKEN ME IN HIS ARMS I'VE WANTED TO TELL HIM ABOUT IT. I'VE HAD TO MAKE EXCUSES... BEFORE HIS ADVANCES...

IT'S BEEN DIFFICULT BELLA... BUT AFTER SUNDAY, IT'LL BE ALL OVER. HE'LL KNOW!



I STAGGERED FROM THE COTTAGE, AS I PASSED ANDY'S NEW CAR, I NOTICED THE TRUNK SLIGHTLY ALAN. I SWUNG IT OPEN, CURIOUS...

EMPTY! THEY LIED TO ME. THEY SAID THE PHONE CHASSIS WAS IN HERE. BELLA'S THINGS WERE IN HERE. THE THINGS ANDY BOUGHT HER! NEW DRESSES. PERHAPS A FUR COAT? NO! OH, LORD... NO!



THEY WERE ABOUT TO RUN OFF TOGETHER. THEY'D BROUGHT ME UP TO THE LOOKS TO FEEL ME. NO WONDER DELLA WANTED ANDY ALONG. NO WONDER WE'D USED HIS CAR. THEY WERE GOING TO LAUGH... AND SAY...

SORRY, ALAN. HAPPY LAST ANNIVERSARY!

THAT'S THE WAY THINGS ARE, ALAN...



AND THEN THEY WERE GOING TO DRIVE OFF AND LEAVE ME THERE... STRANDED...



SUDDENLY I HATED THEM. I HATED THEIR DECEPTION. I HATED DELLA FOR WHAT SHE'D DONE TO OUR MARRIAGE. I HATED ANDY FOR PRETENDING TO BE MY FRIEND. AND ALL THE WHILE TWISTING MY KIFE FROM ME.



I LAY AWAKE FOR A LONG TIME. THE ANGER AND HURT INSIDE ME GROWING. THEN, DELLA AND ANDY CAME IN, WHISPERING SOFTLY, AND I HEARD THE RESOUNDING SOUND OF A KISS...



I FROZE AS SHE CRAWLED INTO BED BESIDE ME. AND I KNEW THAT I HAD TO KILL THEM. I LAY THERE AND I PLANNED IT. IN THE MORNING, WE WERE TO GO SAILING. IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE...



I WOULD KNOCK THEM BOTH UNCONSCIOUS, THEN CAPSIZE THE SAILBOAT AND SWIM TO SHORE...



AND IT WOULD BE JUST AN UNFORTUNATE BOATING ACCIDENT!

BY MORNING I HAD MADE UP MY MIND TO GO THROUGH WITH MY PLAN. BUT SOMEHOW I COULDN'T BRING MYSELF TO DO IT. AND AFTER WE'D BEEN OUT ON THE LAKE A FEW HOURS...



THE STORM SEEMED TO COME UP
SUDDENLY. I **PANICKED** THE BOAT
WOULD CAPSIZE BY ITSELF, BUT
WE MADE IT BACK TO THE LODGE
SAFELY. WE ARRIVED COOLED AND
HAPPY TO THE SKIN...



WE'D BETTER GET
OUT OF THESE
WET CLOTHES...

I'LL LIGHT
A FIRE!

ALL AFTERNOON, THE STORM
RAGED. TOWARD EVENING, IT
SUBSIDED. THE PHONE RANG
AND I ANSWERED IT...

FELLO?
JUST WANTED TO TELL
YOU FOLKS THAT THE
BRIDGE DOWN THE
ROAD IS WASHED OUT,
SO DON'T TRY TO COME
INTO TOWN TOMORROW.



THE BRIDGE... THE BRIDGE AT THE
BOTTOM OF THAT DANGEROUS
GRADE... THE BRIDGE THAT YOU
COULDN'T SEE TILL YOU WERE
ALMOST UPON IT... HAD BEEN
WASHED AWAY...



WHO WAS IT,
ALAN?

NO ONE, DELLA!
JUST A WRONG
NUMBER!

A PLAN WAS FORMING IN MY MIND. A DEATH PLAN...

I USUALLY DRIVE INTO TOWN ON
SUNDAYS TO GET FRESH ROLLS
FOR BREAKFAST, ANDY! OF COURSE,
I WOULDN'T EXPECT YOU TO LET
ME USE YOUR NEW CAR...



OH THAT'S ALL
RIGHT, ALAN! I'LL
BE GLAD TO GO
IN.

ANDY'S FALLEN FOR IT. DELLA WAS NEXT...

HE WON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO,
DELLA... WHY DON'T YOU DRIVE
IN WITH ANDY?



OF COURSE, DEAR...
WE'LL MAKE IT
EARLY, ANDY!
ABOUT EIGHT!



IT WAS DONE. THE BRIDGE WAS WASHED OUT.
THEY'D COME DOWN THE GRADE AND SEE IT AND IT
WOULD BE TOO LATE...



EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE...

THAT NIGHT, DELLA AND ANDY WENT DOWN TO THE
GUEST COTTAGE AGAIN AND RETURNED HOURS LATER. I
PRETENDED I WAS ASLEEP. I FELT CHILLED AND MY
THROAT FELT SORE. I WAS PROBABLY COMING DOWN
WITH A COLDS. IN THE MORNING, I HEARD ANDY'S KNOCK.



READY TO GO INTO
TOWN, DELLA?

LEAD IN A
MINUTE, ANDY!

DELLA DRESSED QUICKLY. I SWALLOWED THE LUMP IN MY THROAT AND LISTENED TO THEM LEAVE THE LODGE.



LET'S GO...

THEN I GOT UP. I DASHED TO THE DOOR, AND WATCHED THEM ZOOM AWAY.



A PITY!
SUCH A LOVELY
NEW CAR!

A MORRID CURIOSITY DREW ME TO THE GUEST COTTAGE. I WANTED TO SEE THE SCENE... THE RUMPLED BED... THE PACKED SUITCASES WITH DELLA'S NEW THINGS THAT ANDY'S BOSS... I KICKED OPEN THE DOOR ANGRILY...



GOOD LORD!

THE COTTAGE WAS CHEERFULLY DECORATED. A COLORFUL SIGN GREETED ME. A BATHNET STOOD IN ONE CORNER. A NEW GUN IN THE OTHER. A COMPLETE LAYETTE WAS Laid OUT ON THE TABLE LEISURE THE BOX OF CIGARS. MATERNITY DRESSES LAY ON THE BED. LITTLE KNITTED THINGS... DIAPERS... BOTTLES... BLANKETS...



THAT'S WHY SHE HAD BEEN GOLD TO ME. DELLA WAS GOING TO HAVE A BABY! SHE WANTED TO SURPRISE ME. ANDY HAD THESE THINGS IN THE TRUNK. OH, GOD... AND I THOUGHT... I... I SENT THEM TO THEIR DEATHS...



I TORE INTO THE HOUSE. THERE WAS ONE CHANCE TO STOP THEM. ONE SLIM CHANCE...



ANDY'S CAR. IT HAS A TELEPHONE! HE GAVE ME THE NUMBER...

I FOUND THE CAR-PHONE NUMBER ON THE BURNAL WHERE ANDY'S LEFT IT. I STUMBLED TO THE PHONE. I LIFTED THE RECEIVER...



NUMBER, PLEASE... CH J-K-K...

I OPENED MY MOUTH. I TRIED TO SPEAK. NOTHING CAME OUT. NOT A SOUND...



I HAD COME DOWN THAT NIGHT WITH A BAD CASE OF LARYNGITIS! -THE END-

**They claim
this coupon
brings you
"good luck"**

"Six months after mailing the coupon, I had a promotion and a big raise in pay!"

"From the moment I marked the reason, my luck changed!"

"My break came when I sent the coupon!"

These statements are typical! I.C.B. gets letters like these regularly. Cooper, readers sign! pay sales. Others wish important productions or new, interesting assignments. Still others find happiness, job security, circumstances never dreamed possible.



Is H LUCKY? The results are so impressive, so much so, in fact, that some egg-shedding CSOs compare to "lucky" CSOs often, that's not true. The real reason for these amazing results is what happens to the person who sheds the egg, not the egg.

Coupon is first step. Naturally, you want to make good. But you've got to do something about it. Studying the coupon is definitely advised. It shows you're fed up with waiting for the broker. You're determined to make your own happen! And this determination alone accounts for much of the "luck" you'll start to experience.



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INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

15

NEIL TAPPA, SCHULTEN & PINKJ

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- 2 Mathematics
- 3 Geometry
- 4 Algebra
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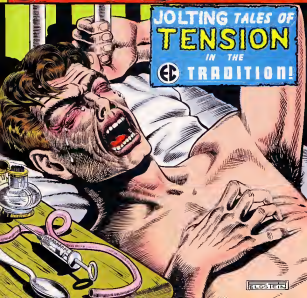
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SUSPENSTORIES



JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**

Franklin

DEADLINE

YOU STAND AND YOU LISTEN TO THE DIN OF CHATTERING TYPEWRITERS AND VOICES SCREAMING INTO TELEPHONES AND THE THUNDER OF THE PRESSER ABOVE. YOU LISTEN TO THE FRANTIC UPSURGE OF THE HUMANITY AND THE MADNESS THAT CONSTITUTE A BUST NEWSPAPER OFFICE. THE SOUND IS MUSIC TO YOUR EARS, LAWRENCE BRETS. THE SMELL OF INK AND SWEAT AND STALE CIGARETTE SMOKE IS PERFUME. YOU STAND WITH YOUR HAT IN YOUR HAND AND YOUR HEAD BOWED AND YOU INHALE THAT PERFUME AND YOU LISTEN TO THAT MUSIC. YOU STAND BEFORE THE DESK OF PAUL MARSH... MANAGING EDITOR OF THE *SLING*... AND YOU GRAB...

JUST GIVE ME **ONE MORE CHANCE**, PHIL! ALL I **NEED** IS A **BREAK!** I'VE **REPORTED!** I **SWEAR IT!** WASN'T I THE **BEST BARN REPORTER** YOU **EVER HAD?** DIDN'T I **BROOK IN THAT CITY HALL STUFF?** DIDN'T I **BUST OPEN THE MILLER MOB...** DIDN'T I...

A LOT OF **ONE'S** PASSES OVER THE BAR SINCE **FROM LARRY!**

YOU'RE LARRY SAGE. YOU'RE SLOPPY AND UNSHAVEN AND YOUR LAST HUNDRED DOLLAR SUIT HANGS LIKE AN OLD SURLAP BACK ON YOUR BAKING SHOULDER. PHIL'S CRACK OUTS DEEP...

THAT WASN'T **ANCE**, PHIL!

LISTEN, LARRY. THERE ISN'T **ANYMORE** PAPER IN TOWN'LL **TOUCH** YOU. WHY SHOULD I **GIVE** YOU A **BREAK?** YOU'LL TAKE YOUR **FIRST WEEK'S** PAY AND **GO SET YOURSELF** TANKED **AND**



I'M NOT **LIFE** THAT **ANY MORE**, PHIL! I **GOTT DRINKING!** I **HAVEN'T TOUCHED A DRO!** FOR A **WEEK!** I **TOLD YOU!** I'VE **REPORTED!** ALL I **WANT** IS A **CHANCE...** A **CHANCE** TO **GET ON MY FEET** AGAIN. I'VE **FIXED EVERY PAPER** IN TOWN. I WAS **TUO PROMD** TO **COME BACK** **HERE**. **BUT NOW**

WHAT'S THE **PITCH**, LARRY? **WHY THE SUCCEN** **CHANCE?** MEET A **DAME?**



YOU STOPPED. YOU THINK OF ANNIE. MYSTERIOUS, LUXURIOUS, DESIRABLE ANNIE...



NOW...DID YOU KNOW, PHIL?

WHAT ELSE?

YOU THINK OF ANNIE COMING INTO THAT BAR LAST WEEK AND SLIPPING UP ONTO THE STOOL BEHIND YOU...



HIT YOU LOOK COMESOME? WERE IF I JOIN YOU?

WOOF! ARE YOU TALKING TART?

BLONDE, BEAUTIFUL ANNIE. YOU THINK OF THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT WITH HER WHEN YOU DISCOVERED THE REASON FOR LYING...



YOU'VE A NICE ONE, LARRY. I LIKE YOU. S'MON, LET'S GET OUT OF THIS JOINT? I'VE GOT A CAR OUTSIDE.

SURE, SURE...

...THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT, DRIVING OUT OF THE CITY...THE ROAD, STRETCHING INTO THE DARKNESS...

LET'S NOT ASK ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT EACH OTHER, LARRY. NO LAST NAMES. NO PHONE NUMBERS. LET'S JUST ENJOY TODAY...WITH NO YESTERDAY AND NO TOMORROW...



THE EXCITEMENT THAT RIPPLED THROUGH YOUR BODY AND MADE YOUR HEART BEAT FASTER AND YOUR BLOOD RUN HOT AS SHE SWUNG HER CAR INTO THE PARKING LOT...



YOU THINK OF THAT WONDERFUL NIGHT WITH ANNIE...AND THE MORNING AFTER, WAKING AND FINDING THE CARIN EMPTY. ANNIE GONE. AND THE ACUTE

LARRY, DARLING, MEET ME NEXT TUESDAY SAME PLACE. SAME TIME.

I LOVE YOU, ANNIE



SO YOU STAND BEFORE PHIL WAGON, BEGGING FOR A JOB. BEGGING FOR A CHANCE AT RESPECTABILITY ONCE AGAIN...

WELL, IT'S TRUE, PHIL? I DID MEET A GIRL. AND I'M IN LOVE WITH HER. I NEED A JOB, PHIL. I NEED DOLLAR! I'M GOING TO SEE HER AGAIN AND I'M... I'M AFRAID. I WANT TO GET SOME CLOTHES...A NICE GIFT FOR HER. A...

LOOK, LARRY! I'LL TELL YOU WHAT I'LL DO...



PHIL LOOKS UP AT YOU GRIMLY...

YOU GO OUT AND SHOW ME
YOU'RE STILL A GOOD
REPORTER AND I'LL PUT YOU
ON THE PAYROLL. YOU COME IN
WITH A SCOOP... A FRONT-PAGE
HEADLINE... AND YOU'RE IN!
FAIR ENOUGH?

THANKS, PHIL!
THANKS A LOT!

PS...

PHIL HOLDS UP HIS HAND...

NOTHING GOOD, LARRY! NO FOMPH!
NOT A DIME TILL YOU PRODUCE.
NOW, SCRAM... I'M BUSY!

SURE,
PHIL! SURE!

YOU CLOSE THE DOOR TO THE MARKING EDITORS'
OFFICE AND YOU STRIDE THROUGH THE CITY ROOM...

WELL, IF IT AIN'T LARRY DRIES...
ONE-TIME AGE REPORTER... NOW
LEADING CANDIDATE FOR
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS!

HELLO, STAN!
GOT THE GRACKS
I'VE GOT STONKIN'
...AND I'M COMIN'
BACK TO WORK!

FOR. COMIN' BACK
HERE? DON'T
MAKE ME LAUGH!

PHIL'S COMIN' TO GIVE ME
ANOTHER CHANCE, STAN! IF I
COME IN WITH A FARN, HE'LL
PUT ME ON SO ONE SHOT!
LET ME HEAR! I'M IN A
HURRY!

STAN LAUGHS AFTER YOU, HIS
VOICE RISING ABOVE THE UPROAR...

WHY DON'T YOU DO A SPREAD
ON HOW A GAY SLIDES FROM THE
TOP TO THE BOTTOM ON A
BOTTLE OF STONK, LARRY...

HIS VOICE... HIGH-PITCHED... IRRES-
TING... MAKING YOU SQUENCH YOUR
FISTS...

THE ONLY THING YOU'LL COME
IN WITH WILL BE ONE ANOTHER
OF A HANGOVER...

YOU SLAM THE DOOR TO THE CITY
ROOM AND YOU STAND IN THE
SILENCE OF THE HALL... AND YOU
BITE YOUR TEETH...

NOT! NOT!
I CAN DO IT!
I CAN...

AND SUDDENLY YOU THINK OF ANNIE... BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL ANNIE... AND YOU *KNOW* YOU CAN DO IT... YOU STRAIGHTEN UP...AND YOU BRING DOWN THE HALL AND OUT INTO THE STREET...



THE MORNING SUN IS WARM UPON YOUR FACE... THE TRAFFIC MOVES SLOW AROUND YOU... YOU BEGIN TO WALK...



THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, LARRY. TODAY. TOMORROW IS TUESDAY. TOMORROW NIGHT YOU MEET ANNIE AGAIN. YOU'VE GOT TO DO IT... *TODAY*...



BY AFTERNOON, PAIN HAS TAKEN HOLD OF YOU... YOU'VE WALKED ALL DAY AND YOUR LEGS WON'T COME ACROSS ANYTHING. *NOT ONE LEAF!* BY EVENING, YOUR STOMACH IS A TIGHT, NERVOUS KNOT.



I... I NEED A DRINK... I...

NO, LARRY. NO! THAT'S NOT THE ANSWER. KEEP WALKING! YOU'LL FIND SOMETHING. YOU'LL GET THAT STORY. KEEP WALKING...

A CUP OF COFFEE. THAT'S WHAT I NEED!



YOU BRING INTO THE ALL-NIGHT DINER AND SLIDE ONTO A STOOL... THE PLACE IS EMPTY. THERE'S NO ONE BEHIND THE COUNTER. YOU'RE READY TO CALL FOR SERVICE WHEN YOU HEAR THE MUFFY VOICES COMING FROM THE BACK...



I SAID YOU'VE GOT GOING ANYWHERE, YOU... YOU...

I'LL DO AS I PLEASE, YOU FAT SLOB!

YOU LISTEN AS THE MAN AND WOMAN IN THE APARTMENT BEHIND THE DINER ARGUE... AND THEN YOU HEAR THE QUICK MOVEMENTS... THE FURNITURE OVERTURN... SOMETHING CRASH... AND THE BLOOD-CURDLING SCREAM



NO! NO! YAAAE... OH...

WHAT THE...

YOU SWING OFF THE STOOL AND DASH AROUND THE COUNTER TO THE DOOR...



YOU TUG AT THE KNOB... FOUND AT THE DOOR... BEYOND, A BODY SLUMPS TO THE FLOOR. FOOTSTEPS APPROACH. A KEY TURNS. THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN...



YOU PEE INTO THE DIRTY APARTMENT BEYOND THE DOOR... AT THE UPTURNED TABLE, THE SMASHED LAMP... THE WOMAN LYING SILENT AND STILL AMID THE RUBBLE...



SHE WAS NO GOOD?... SON... SHE WAS NOTHING BUT A TRAMP?... SON...

YOU TURN TO THE HEAVY BUILDING MAN IN THE GREASE-STAINED APRON WHO SITS NOW UPON ONE OF THE COUNTER-STOOLS WITH HIS HEAD IN HIS HANDS, CRYING LIKE A BABY...



YOU SNATCH A PAPER NAPKIN AND A PENCIL FROM THE SHELF BEHIND THE COUNTER, YOU SCRIBBLE DOWN NOTES AS THE MURDERER DOES OUT HIS WORDS...



SHE CAME TO WORK FOR ME... AS A WAITRESS HERE... TWO YEARS AGO. SHE USED TO FLIRT WITH EVERY GROOMER THAT CAME IN. SHE WENT OUT WITH THEM... DRIVING... DRINKING... YOU KNOW. SHE WAS JUST SAD... BUT... SON... I... I FELL IN LOVE WITH HER...



I ASKED HER TO MARRY ME. I WANTED TO SAVE HER FROM HERSELF. I WANTED TO GIVE HER A NEW LIFE...

MARRY YOU, MIKE? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS!



YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORK. YOU CAN TAKE IT EASY. WE'LL FIX UP THE PLACE BACK THERE...

I PROMISE HER THE WORLD. YOU CAN BUY NEW FURNITURE... NEW CLOTHES... WE, WE COULD HAVE... KIDS!



NOT ME, MIKE! I WANT TO LIVE IN PEACE. I DON'T WANT TO BE FIED DOWN WITH KIDS...

ALL RIGHT, HONEY? NO KIDS THEN. WHATEVER YOU SAY! I LOVE YOU MARRY ME!



I'LL THINK ABOUT IT, MIKE! I'LL THINK ABOUT IT!

I KEPT AFTER HER. I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. I SHOULD HAVE GROWN BETTER, INDIVIDUALLY...



OHAY, MIKE. I'LL MARRY YOU!

YOU WON'T REGRET IT, HONEY. YOU'LL SEE.

NO, SHE DIDN'T REGRET IT. NOT HER. I WAS HER REAL TICKET... HER BANKROLL. AND SHE TOOK ADVANTAGE OF IT...



WHAT'S THAT, MIKE?

CLOTHES, MIKE. A WHOLE NEW MINDSET. YOU SAID I COULD BUY CLOTHES...

BUT THEN SHE STARTED GOING OUT AT NIGHT, TWICE THREE TIMES A WEEK. SHE WAS UP TO HER OLD TRICKS AGAIN...



PLEASE, HONEY. STAY HOME TONIGHT. DON'T GO OUT AGAIN. STAY HOME WITH ME.

IN THIS RAT TRAP? NOT ME, SISTER. I WANT TO HAVE SOME FUN.

SHE WAS NO GOOD. SHE SPENT ALL MY MONEY ON CLOTHES, A CAR, GOOD TIMES. SHE RAN AROUND WITH PLENTY OF MEN...



IT'S FOUR O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING. WHERE ARE YOU ALL NIGHT?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.

FINALLY I COULDN'T STAND IT ANY LONGER. I HAD HER FOLLOWED. THE PRIVATE COP I HIRED GAVE ME A REPORT...

SHE PICKED UP SOME GUY AT A BARGE PALACE AND... WELL, YOU WERE RIGHT ABOUT HER...



SO TONIGHT, WHEN SHE SAID SHE WAS GOING OUT AGAIN, I TRIED TO STOP HER...

YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYWHERE, YOU... TELL I'LL GO AS I PLEASE YOU SAY STOP



I... I COULDN'T HELP IT I GRABBED HER BY THE THROAT AND SQUEEZED...

BOO HAAA YOU'RE NOT DOING ANYWHERE ANYMORE



SO NOW YOU'VE GOT YOUR STORY, LARRY CRIES... RIGHT FROM THE MURDERER'S MOUTH. IT'S FRONT-PAGE MATERIAL, LARRY. IT MEANS A JOB. IT MEANS...

YOU GO INTO THE SHADY BACK APARTMENT AND CLOSE THE DOOR. YOU STEP OVER THE STILL BODY OF THE MURDERED WOMAN AND YOU PICK UP THE PHONE...



YOU A PHONE, MISTER?

IN THERE! IN THE BACK...

HELLO? CITY DEPT? GIVE ME PHIL MASON? HELLO, HASN'T I'VE GOT MY SCOOTER SWITCH ON REMOTE AND LISTEN TO THIS...



YOU DICTATE IT... THE WHOLE THING WITH ALL THE GORY DETAILS. IT'S JUST LIKE OLD TIMES AGAIN, LARRY JUST LIKE OLD TIMES...

... AND NOW, I'M GOING TO PUT IN A CALL FOR THE COPS. THAT'S A-GOING! WHAT A GREAT YARN! COME ON IN AND PICK UP YOUR FIRST WEEK'S PAY



YOU PUT DOWN THE PHONE AND YOU SMILE. YOU KNOW NOW THAT YOU'LL NEVER HIT THE BOTTLE AGAIN. YOU'VE FOUND YOURSELF ONCE MORE, LARRY! YOU'RE A NEW MAN. AND YOU'VE GOT A WHOLE NEW LIFE AHEAD OF YOU... WITH ANNE



MOANNNNN

GASPY

YOU SPIN AROUND, THE FISHES ON THE FLOOR? IT'S MOVING!...

MY GOD? SHE'S NOT DEAD?

UGH... DAMN...

SQUEEZE HARD, LARRY! MAKE SURE THIS TIME, LARRY, THE DOOR IS CLOSED. NIKI WILL NEVER KNOW! MAKE SURE SHE DIES THIS TIME... SQUEEZE... FIGHTER... FIGHTER...

YOUR STUFF, LARRY. IT'S GOING OUT THE WINDOW! SHE'S NOT DEAD? HE DIDN'T KILL HER? DO SOMETHING, LARRY, DO SOMETHING!

NO? I WON'T LET YOU! NO? YOU'RE NOT GOING TO RUIN EVERYTHING FOR ME? NO...

O-O- GHHH!

ALL RIGHT, LARRY. THAT'S ENOUGH. SHE'S FINISHED. GET UP, QUIT YOURSELF OFF. GO AHEAD... CALL THE COPS...

HELL? POLICE? I WANT TO REPORT A MURDER...

HOW CO BACE, LARRY, GO BACK TO THE PAPP. LOOK AT HER. PAGE? LOOK AT IT...

MY GOD?

IT... IT'S ANNIE!

ANNIE STARES UP AT YOU WITH BLIND BULGING EYES. YOU BACK AWAY GASPING, YOUR STOMACH TIGHTENING... KNOTS. YOUR MOUTH IS SUDDENLY DRY...

I... GROSS... I... I NEED A DRINK?

YES, LARRY! YOU NEED A DRINK. YOU NEED TEAL, FINELINE... A HUNDRED DRINKS, BUT NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOU DRINK, LARRY, YOU'LL NEVER ERASE ANNIE'S BULGING EYES FROM YOUR MIND? YOU'LL ALWAYS SEE HER... EVEN INTO INSANITY... EVEN TO... THE END.

THE MONKEY

I SPRAWL FACE DOWNWARD ON THE BUILT-UP IRON BED OF A DISMAL, CHEAP HOTEL ROOM, WITH MY SUITS LONG DRIFTED AND THE DARK STAINED BLINDS FROM MY HEAVINGS, AND I TREMBLE AND SHIVER, STARTING AT EVERY SOUND THAT BODIES OUTSIDE MY DOOR. MY FIT LIES OPEN BESIDE ME, THE INSTRUMENTS OF MY RELIEF SPILLED OUT UPON THE DIRTY RED SHEETS... THE SPIKE, THE NOSE, THE BLANDERED SPOON, THE CAN OF STERNO, AND I WAIT. I WAIT WITH MY FIT FOR THE WELCOME FOOTSTEPS ON THE STAIRS... FOR THE STACCATO BROODING UPON THE DOOR... FOR THE FAMILIAR FIGURE TO BAINTEER THROUGH IT WITH HIS HAND EXTENDED, TAKING MY MONEY AND SLAPPING ME MY PRECIOUS JOLT OF 'N'. I'VE WAITED, BUT MY PUNER HAS NOT COME...



I'VE WAITED THROUGH THE HOURS WHILE THE PER-
SPARATION POURED FROM MY PORES AND MY STOMACH
TIED ITSELF INTO KNOTS AND MY MUSCLES FELT LIKE
RED-HOT POON AND THE MONKEY ON MY BACK BEGAN
TO SCRATCH AND TEAR AND SCREAM UNTIL I HAD TO
HOLD MY TREMBLING HANDS TIGHT OVER MY MOUTH
TO SHUT THAT BLAZING MONKEY UP...

AND AS I LIE HERE WITH MY BODY BAKED IN PAIN AND
MY THROAT DRY AND BURNING AND MY TONGUE FUZZY
IN MY MOUTH, I THINK OF HOW I FIRST BECAME A
NEAD... A USER... A DOPE ADDICT...



"POACH" IS JUVENILE... "JOINT" A KEEPER... A MARIJUANA CIGARETTE. MOST "HEADS" START WITH "F" AND GRADUATE TO "B" OR "M". BEYOND OR MARIJUANA. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. I WAS GOING TO CENTRAL HIGH BACK THEN...



HE'S EDDIE! C'MON ALONG. HE AND SOME OF THE GALS ARE GOING TO BLAST A FEW OF THESE.

WHAT ARE THEY, BUD?

AW, C'MON, EDDIE. WE'RE GOING HAVE A WHOLE... A BALL. SHE'LL BE THERE. I KNOW YOU LIKE SUE.

SUE? SUE BIKINI? SHE... SHE SMOKES 'T'S



I FIGURED IT WOULD BE A GOOD WAY TO GET FRIENDLY WITH SUE, SO I WENT ALONG WITH BIL. HE TOOK ME TO A SHOT CELLAR CLUB HOUSE NEAR THE SCHOOL...



WELCOME TO THE F-PARTY, EDDIE.

WHERE'S SUE, BUD?

POP GRASS BUTTS, YOU DUMBIE. DON'T YOU POP THIS STUFF YET?



MARI-JUANA?

COOL IT, YOU JERK. YOU WANT TO GET ME FIRED UP? SOME BANG MAY BE FADING IN. C'MON POP IN.

WO, THANKS. BIL, I'D RATHER NOT...



I COULDN'T BELIEVE IT. SUE HONNE? SURE! MARI-JUANA. I WAS CRAZY ABOUT SUE. I THOUGHT SHE WAS THE PRETTIEST GIRL IN CENTRAL HIGH...

SUE'S CRAZY, EDDIE! SHE'S REAL STRAIGHT! SHE'S ON IT! SORRY YOU WON'T JOIN UP. WELL...

HOLD ON, BIL.



SHE'LL BE HERE SOON, EDDIE. HERE? LIGHT UP ON THIS WHILE YOU'RE WAITING.

TH-THANKS, BIL.



THAT "ROACH" I BLASTED WHILE WAITING FOR SUE WINNER WAS MY **FIRST** MARIJUANA CIGARETTE. SID SCANLON, WHO'D GIVEN IT TO ME, WHISPERED THAT IT'S FINISHED IT. SUE NEVER CAME, BUT BY THAT TIME I DON'T CARE. I WAS **HIP**.

I NEVER REALIZED TILL IT WAS MUCH TOO LATE THAT SID HAD **LIED** TO ME ABOUT SUE... THAT SHE WAS **NEVER** COMING... AND THAT HE'D ONLY GIVEN ME THE "**ROACH**" TO GET ME **STARTED**. SID SCANLON WAS A "**POCKET**!"



"GIVE ANOTHER ONE, SID. I'M **FLYIN'**."

"THESE THING COST **DOODS**, BOON. LET YOU HAVE ONE FOR **TWO INTS.**"



"**TWO INTS.** FOR ONE **LOOPY** **HUTT**?"

"TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT, **BOON**."

I TOOK IT. I WAS "**HOOKED**!" I REACHED INTO MY **POCKET** AND FORKED OVER WHAT HAD TO BE MY **FIRST** IN A LONG SERIES OF **PAYMENTS** FOR "**THE STUFF**."

SID NEVER HAD TO LOOK FOR ME AFTER THAT. I LOOKED FOR HIM. AND IT WASN'T LONG BEFORE I WAS **BEGGING** HIM FOR...
"SOMETHIN' **STRONGER**."
SID: I DON'T GET MUCH OF A **RISE** OUT OF "I" ANYMORE.



"**PILLS**, SID?"

"**WACKY** **FB**... **DEVIL**... "**3-PILLS**"... **NEVER** **DRIVE**..."



"I'LL... **TAKE** IT, SID. HERE YARE."

"**THANKS**, **BOON**. I'LL BE **SEEKIN'** YOU. **3-LONG**."



"I CAN GET YOU SOME **'PILLS**," SID.

I WAS **PROMOTED**. NOW I WAS A "**JENNY-HEAD**," A **RAVENSHEAD-HEAD**, A **SEKEDRINE** **ADDICT**.

AND THEN, IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT I GRABBED TO



"**RED** ON **FELLOW**, KID?"

"IT DOESN'T **MATTER**, SID... **EITHER** **ONE**. I **NEED** IT **BAD**. **GIMME**..."



"**W**", SID. I **NEED** "**W**."

"**GRAB**, **EDDIE**. BUT, IT'LL **COST** YOU **TWO** **DODS** A **GOLF** AND A **FIN** FOR THE **FF**."

IT HAD TAKEN ME LESS THAN **THREE MONTHS** TO MOVE FROM PLASTIC 'JIVE-T' TO POPPING 'Y'. BOB PROVIDED ME WITH 'THE FIT'... A 'SPICE' ON 'WYDE'... A LENGTH OF **ADIDAS HOSE** TO DISTEND THE VEIN, A **SUDON** TO NEAR THE 'Y' IN, AND A CAN OF STERNO. I WAS ON IT.

I NEED A FIX, BOB. HERE'S THE TWO DUCKS.

SORRY, EDDIE. MY OLD SUPPLIER GOT **SHAGGED** BY THE **HEATS**. A JOLT WILL COST YOU FEEB, NOW.



THE ALLEGED MY MOM AND DAD HADN'T ENOUGH TO KEEP MY NEEDS SATISFIED NOW. I NEEDED **MORE DUCKS**. I GOT A JOB AFTER SCHOOL.

S'MATTER, EDDIE? YOU LOOK SOGG!

IT'S NOthin', MR. CLEMENTS. I'M ALL RIGHT. E.P., CAN YOU GIVE ME AN **ADVANCE** ON MY PAY, TODAY, MR. CLEMENTS?



TODAY'S ONLY **WEDNESDAY**, EDDIE! ALREADY, I'VE GIVEN YOU **HALF** YOUR **FEET**.

I NEED IT, MR. CLEMENTS! PLEASE!

YOU LOOK FUNNY, EDDIE. YOUR EYES...

GET OFF MY **BACK**, MR. CLEMENTS! ARE YOU GOING TO **SPOT** ME THE **BOUGH** ON AM'S TOUT?

YOU FINISH THE **WEEK**... YOU GET **PAID**. NO MORE **ADVANCES**.

WHY, YOU **DIRTY LITTLE GUN** FIGHT?



I COULDN'T **HOLD** A JOB AFTER THAT. MOM AND DAD NEVER KNEW IT, BUT I STOPPED **GOING** TO SCHOOL. I USED TO GO **DOWNTOWN**, TO THE **DEPARTMENT STORES**... AND **SHOPLIFT**...

...AND THEN TO **PARK** THE STUFF I **SHIPPED**...

WHEN'D YOU **GET** IT?

DON'T ASK **QUESTIONS** JUST **GAMME** WHAT IT'S **WORTH** TO YOU, AND **MAKE** IT **SHAPPY**.



I'D TAKE THE DODGE I'D GOTTEN FROM THE STUFF TO SMILE, AND I'D TRACK DOWN SID.



YEAH! TWENTY-BUCKS WORTH!

THAT'S ONE FID!



ONE? WHY, YOU...

SORRY, UH... THAT'S THE FIDGE! TAKE IT OR TRY A GOLD TURKEY?



I TRIED A 'GOLD TURKEY'... A MYSTERY... ONCE AND ONLY ONCE. I WAS SHORT OF CASH, ALL NIGHT LONG I PAVED THE FLOOR OF MY PAD AS THE TREMBLES BEGAN AND THE MADNESS SWIFT OVER ME AND I COMMUTED TO THE BATHROOM AND PUMPTED MY GOYS OUT AND THE SURGICAL PAINED FROM ME AND MY NERVE-ENDS BURNED AND THE MONKEY ON MY BACK BEGAN TO SCRATCHING CLEAR AND TEAL UNTIL...



THE NEXT MORNING, WHEN I FINALLY SCORED WITH SID, I REBID HIM...



I'LL NEVER GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN. NEVER, I MADE UP MY MIND THAT MIGHT THAT I'D ALWAYS HAVE ENOUGH DODGE FOR MY FOES. I KNEW I COULD NEVER BOTHER A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL. I SWIPPED THE MONEY FOR A JOLT FROM MY OLD MAN'S WALLET WHILE HE SLEPT.



I RUSHED HOME, HOLDING, AND TORE UPSTAIRS TO MY PAD. MOM TRIED TO CORNER ME ON THE WAY, BUT I BASHED HER ASIDE...



I SLAMMED INTO MY ROOM AND LOCKED THE DOOR AND PULLED OPEN MY DRAWER WHERE I KEPT MY FIT.

OF COURSE, WHERE AS ITY I HAD IT HERE?!



I LOOKED AROUND... DAD SAT ON THE BED BEHIND ME, STARING AT ME, HIS EYES BURNING... HIS MOUTH SET IN A TIGHT GRIM LINE...

THIS WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, EDDIE?

POP!



HE HELD THE FIT IN HIS HAND, HIS EYES FILLED WITH TEARS.

MY SON... TAKING DADS?

GIVE IT TO ME, POP! GIVE ME THAT FIT.



HE STARTED TO LECTURE ME, HIS MOUTH KEPT OPENING AND CLOSING AND WORDS POURED OUT, BUT I DIDN'T HEAR THEM. I KEPT LOOKING AT THE FIT WHILE MY THROAT GREW DRIER AND DRIER AND MY STOMACH STARTED TO GROWL AND HEAVE AND THE MONKEY CLIMBED UP THERE AGAIN...

...AND THE PAIN BEGAN, THE MONKEY STARTED SCREECHING AND CLAWING AND I STARTED GETTING SICK AND DIZZY AND THE TREMBLES CAME OVER ME...



WHAT DID WE EVER DO? WE RAVE YOU EVERYTHING, WE TRIED! WE SACRIFICED! WHY, EDDIE? WHY?

CAN IT, POP! SHIMME THE FIT, FOR GOD'S SAKES!



NO, EDDIE. YOU'RE THROUGH WITH THE STUFF, I'M GOING TO TURN YOU OVER TO THE POLICE FOR A GURNE.

NO! NO, POP! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!

POP STARTED TO GET UP, I FELT ALL WILD AND CRAZY AND DESPERATE INSIDE, AND THAT MAD-DENIED MONKEY KEPT SCREAMING AND CLAWING.

SUDDENLY I SAW MYSELF GOING THROUGH A WINDOW AGAIN AND EVERYTHING WENT WHITE-HOT BEFORE MY EYES. I SCRATCHED UP AN END-TABLE LAMP AND BROUGHT IT DOWN ON POP'S HEAD...



IT'S FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, EDDIE. THEY'LL GET YOU OFF IT, THEY'LL...

SHIMME THAT FIT, POP!



POP WENT SPRAWLING AND I GRABBED THE FIT AND DASHED OUT OF THE BED-ROOM. MOM SCREAMED AFTER ME.



EDDIE? EDDIE, COME BACK?

THAT WAS YESTERDAY. NOW, I LIE SPRAWLED ON THE SWEAT-BOARDED BED OF A DISMAL CHEAP HOTEL ROOM WITH MY SAITS LONG-EMPTY, TREMBLING AND SHIVERING, WAITING FOR SID.



OH, GOD... GOD... I'VE GOT TO HAVE A FIT? WHERE IS HE? WHERE'S SID?

THE SINK IN MY ROOM IS STAINED BILIOUS WITH MY HEAVINGS AND MY FIT LIES OPEN BESIDE ME AND I STARE AT EVERY SOUND OUTSIDE MY DOOR. AND THEN IT COMES, THE HEAVY NOISE...



SID? THANK GOD?

I LEAP FROM MY BED, GRIPPING WITH PERSPIRATION, THE SHIRT WITH THE COOL-ON-THE-FLYT GRAPHIC TIE IN HIS BLUE COAT WITH THE BRASS BUTTONS AND THE GLAMOUR TIN SHELLS...



YOU EDDIE ANDERSON?

YEA... YOU GOT THE WRONG GUY, COPPER!

THE JARD PUSHED PAST ME, GRIMACED DOWN AT THE SHIRT OF HIS LEGS, THE LEGS OF HIS AND UNDOCKED HIS CLIPS...



I GOT THE JEFFY GUY, EDDIE. JED SCARSON WAS POKED UP AFTER YOUR MOM PHONED US. HE TOLD US WHERE TO FIND YOU.

YOU AIN'T GOT NOTHING ON ME. THAT AIN'T MY FIT. I WAS HOLDIN' IT FOR SID. I DON'T FORGOT THE STUFF! I...

THAT'S YOUR FIT, EDDIE? THE FIT YOU FORGOT AWAY FROM YOUR FATHER WHEN YOU KILLED HIM.



KILLED... MY... FATHER...

YOU MUST'VE NEEDED A FIT JEFFY JED, EDDIE. YOU HIT HIM SO HARD, YOU SPLIT HIS HEAD OPEN WITH THAT LAMP. HE DIED INSTANTLY. LET'S GO...



NO, GOD... NOT ON, GOD? GET THIS MONKEY OFF MY BACK? ON, GOD?



LAST LAUGH!

When the plane reached 70,000 feet, the warning buzzer sounded. Major Clagg jumped up, his arms and legs tingling with nervousness. With scrupulous care he pulled the high-altitude oxygen mask over his face, strapped the specially devised oxygen tank to his chest-harness. His voice rised in a parody of a tune which he always sang before launching himself on one of these stretchyous missions: "How High I Am!" he warbled, pushing his feet into the bulky pressurized boots. Another buzzer sounded and Major Clagg felt a slight pain at the base of his skull. It was a normal symptom . . . he was aware of it each time he parachuted.

At 72,000 feet he clambered into his pressurized trousers and jacket, barely able to move because of the stiffness of the material encasing his body. As he zipped up the jump suit, a chuckle sounded in his chest and bubbled out his mouth. He remembered one of his first jumps, from a height of 45,000 feet. He certainly got a guffaw *that* time, by releasing a fireball of pingpong balls which showered down upon the tiny audience of military men far below. It was *that* exploit which gave him the nickname "Chuckles" . . . a name admirably suited to the most violent practical-joker in the entire parachute corps. Each leap after that, the spectators had been alerted to some hysterical peccadillo of the Major's. He always got a laugh in his leaps, Clagg assured himself with a smug.

The red bulb flashed: 75,000 feet. The Major pulled the pressurized gloves over his

hands, after making certain that the chetmometer on his heated inner vest and underdrawers was working perfectly. He moved toward the jump door, poking at the anti-blackout hose to assure himself that it was firmly attached to the intake socket in his plexiglass helmet. Then, with a sly smile, he opened his jump kit and pulled out a huge cloth doll almost five feet tall. This would be his crowning gag. Clagg thought to himself with glee . . . on his greatest jump he would release the doll and let it plummet downwards toward the nervous spectators. From a height of 77,500 feet the big floppy doll would drop with incredible speed . . . and the men gathered below would think it was Clagg, himself! What a laugh he'd get with *that* stunt! The biggest practical joke of his career!

The jump door opened and Clagg tossed himself. Then, with a chuckle that sounded weird inside his helmet, he released the doll and watched it drop down. A moment later, with a chuckle, Major Clagg stepped out into open air.

A buzzing sound brought him back to consciousness; the intake valve had pulled him out of his blackout. And the rest of the equipment was working perfectly, he realized, as he turned copy-curry in the thin, freezing air . . . the result of meticulous care.

He counted to ten, then reached for the ripcord. His finger tightened on the mechanism and he braced himself for the inevitable churning shock. Then he pulled hard. Nothing happened, except for a high, nervous giggle inside the Major's big plexiglass helmet! In all his frantic haste to perpetuate his big doll gag, "Chuckles" was the victim of a slight oversight: *that* hilarious joke was on HIM!

For Major Clagg had left his parachute in the plane!

The KIDNAPPER

DANIEL SAT NERVOUSLY UPON THE BED IN THEIR SCARLED TENEMENT APARTMENT BESIDE HIS PALE SMILING WIFE, TERESA, FINGERING THE SOFT PINK FLESH OF THIS MIRACLE OF LIFE THAT WAS THEIR NEWBORN SON. HE SAIED IN AMY UPON THE WRINKLED TEAR-STAINED FACE AND THE TINY PUDDY HANDS WITH THEIR TEN SHAPELESS FINGERS, AND HE MOODED AND WEPED A LITTLE IN TRANSELMENY AND RELIEF, THE WAITING WAS FINALLY OVER, ALL THE FEARS AND APPREHENSIONS WERE ERASED. TERESA WAS WELL, AND THE BABY WAS WELL, AND OUTSIDE, BEYOND THE BROKEN BEDROOM WINDOW, THE SUN WAS SHINING...



IT'S A **FINE** BABY, TERESA. A **HEALTHY** BABY. HE... HE IS **PERFECT**.

EXCEPT FOR THE **BIRTH-MARK**, DANIEL... SEE? UPON HIS **PALM**? THIS **BLACK MARK** LIKE A **BLOT** OF WRITING **INK**?

DANIEL CLOSED THE TINY FIST AND STROKED HIS WIFE'S HAIR THAT NOW LAY STRAIGHT UPON THE PILLOW, STILL GASPING WITH THE PERCUSSION OF HER PAIN.

TERESA LOOKED INTO DANIEL'S EYES AND HER PALID FACE GLOWED WITH THE STRANGE RADIANT BEAUTY OF ROTHENHOOD.



IT IS **NOTHING**, TERESA! A **BEAUTY** "MARK"? A **SIGN** OF **LUCK**? PERHAPS. SOMEDAY, OUR SON WILL BE **IRON-ARMED**. PERHAPS IT IS A **MARK** OF **FATE**.

OH, DANIEL, I AM **SO** **HAPPY** NOW I **LOVED** FOR THIS **DAY**... **PRAYED** FOR IT AND NOW IT HAS **COME**.



I HAVE GIVEN YOU A **SON**, MY DEAREST. AND IN TIME, THERE WILL BE **OTHERS**... A **DAUGHTER**...

PLEASE TERESA, LET'S NOT **TALK** ABOUT THAT NOW.

DANIEL, TURNING AWAY SO THAT HIS WIFE WOULD NOT SEE HIS EYES FILLING WITH TEARS...



WHAT IS IT, DANIEL? WHAT IS WRONG? WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM ME? TELL ME!

THE DOCTOR HAS SAID THAT YOU CAN NEVER HAVE ANOTHER CHILD, TERESA!

THE FREEDOM OF THE TENEMENT APARTMENT FELL SILENT. ONLY THE TRAFFIC NOISE BELOW, THE SORROWING CHILDREN, THE CAR HORN, THE MOURNFUL CALLS OF THE PROBLEMS, FILTERED UPWARD. THEN, THE NEW-BORN BABY BEGAN TO CRY...



IT, IT ISN'T TRUE, DANIEL. TELL ME IT ISN'T TRUE!

THE BABY, TERESA. HE IS MOURNING. I WILL GO OUT NOW.

DANIEL CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE BEDROOM AND LEANED BACK AGAINST IT, LISTENING TO THE BABY'S CRIES FADE, AND CONTENTED SACKLING SOUNDS REPLACE THEM...



OH, HOW I HOPE THAT I COULD TELL YOU IT ISN'T TRUE, TERESA! OH, HOW I WISH IT!

DANIEL'S SON WAS TWO MONTHS OLD WHEN IT HAPPENED. TERESA, WHO BELIEVED LONG-HEARD-OF-THINGS, RAN OUT IN THE SECOND-HAND CARRIAGE THEY'D BOUGHT TO CATCH THE FEW BRIGHT HOURS OF SUNLIGHT THAT FILTERED DOWN INTO THEIR BLUM-CARION.



LOOK, DANIEL. HE IS ASLEEP!

YES, TERESA. I AM SURE WE WILL EAT NOW.

TERESA AND DANIEL HAD CLIMBED BACK UP THE LITTER-SCRAMBLED STAIRS TO THEIR APARTMENT. THE BABY SLEPT SOUNDLY IN THE CARRIAGE OUTSIDE. BUT WHEN THE HAPPY PARENTS HAD RETURNED...



HE SHOULD BE AWAKE BY NOW, DANIEL...

HE... HE... OH, MY GOD, MY BABY... WHERE IS MY BABY?

TERESA TOOK AWAY THE HAND-AND-DOWN BLANKETS THAT KINDLY NEIGHBOURS HAD GIVEN HER, AND GLARED ABOUT THE CARRIAGE, WHICH STOOD... AS IF, PERCHANCE, HER SON HAD THROWN AND NOW LAY MIDDEN IN SOME REMOTE CORNER...



MY BABY? MY BABY IS GONE!

FREDERICK, FREDERICK, HAVE YOU SEEN OUR BABY?

THE OLD MAN CALLED FREDERICK SAT DOZING UPON THE TENEMENT STOOD. HE LIFTED HIS HEAD SLEEPILY...



SOMEONE TOOK OUR BABY, FREDERICK! DID YOU SEE WHO TOOK HIM?

WHY WERE I? SOMEONE TOOK YOUR BABY?

MY BABY... DOB... MY BABY!

THE POLICE CAME, AND REPORTED FROM THE PAPERS CAME, AND EVERYBODY ASKED EVERYBODY QUESTIONS. THE POLICE WROTE IN THEIR LITTLE BOOKS, AND THE REPORTERS WROTE IN THEIR LITTLE BOOKS, AND AFTER A WHILE THEY WENT AWAY AND DANIEL COMFORTED HIS SORROWING WIFE.

DO NOT WORRY, TERESA. THEY WILL FIND OUR SON.
OH, DANIEL... DANIEL...



AND EVERY NIGHT DANIEL AND TERESA WOULD LEAVE THE POLICE STATION, AND WALK THEIR LONELY WAY BACK TO THEIR TENEMENT. NO TERESA WOULD CRY...

I WANT MY BABY. I WANT MY BABY. NO...
PLEASE, TERESA. YOU WILL MAKE YOURSELF SICK. DO NOT GIVE ANYMORE!



EVERY MORNING, DANIEL AND TERESA WOULD WALK TO THE POLICE STATION AND SIT ALL DAY UPON THE HARD WOODEN BENCHES AND WAIT FOR THE NEWS THAT THE POLICE HAD FOUND THEIR SON. BUT NO NEWS WOULD COME...



SORRY, POLICE? NOTHING YET?

BUT WHO WOULD WANT TO KIDNAP OUR CHILD?

WE ARE POOR! WE COULD NOT AFF TO GET HIM BACK! WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING?

THE DAYS PASSED AND THE WEEKS PASSED AND STILL THE BABY WAS NOT FOUND. TERESA GAVE UP, STARRING OUT OF THE STAINED WINDOW WITH GRIED-OUT EYES. DANIEL TRIED TO CHEER HER.

THE PEOPLE WHO TOOK HIM WILL, REALIZE THAT THEY HAVE MADE A MISTAKE...
HE IS GONE FOR GOOD!



YOU WILL SEE, TERESA. THEY WILL COME, ONE DAY, AND PUT HER BACK IN THE CARRIAGE, AND YOU WILL HAVE YOUR BABY AGAIN, YOU WILL SEE...
I WILL NEVER HAVE MY BABY AGAIN. HE IS GONE FOR GOOD...



THE LONG WEEKS CRACKED INTO MONTHS AND TERESA GREW WORSE EACH DAY. MULEN, SILENT, SITTING DOWN BY NIGHT, STARRING AT THE EMPTY CARRIAGE, NO NEWS CAME FROM THE POLICE, AND ALL HOPE OF EVER FINDING THEIR BABY SEEMED GONE.



COME, TERESA - YOU MUST EAT SOMETHING!

I AM NOT HUNGRY!

AT NIGHT, LYING BESIDE HIS WIFE, WHO GREW THINNER AND PALER EACH DAY, DANIEL WOULD LISTEN TO HER UNHEARD BREATHING AND HER SILENT WHISPERING.



MY BABY. I WANT MY BABY. OH, GOD, GIVE ME BACK MY BABY.

FINALLY, AFTER SIX LONG TORMENTING MONTHS, DANIEL MADE UP HIS MIND. HE WOULD FIND THEM! SURE HE WOULD SEARCH THE WHOLE CITY AND FIND HIM.



I'M GOING OUT, TERESA.
BRING ME MY BARK, DANIEL!

ALL DAY LONG, FROM DAWN TILL DUSK, DANIEL ROAMED THE CITY... SEARCHING, SEARCHING, PEERING INTO CARRIAGES, OPENING TINY INFANTS' HANDS, STUDYING THEIR PALMS...



HEY YOU! GET AWAY FROM THERE, YOU DIRTY TRAMP!
SORRY!

AND AT NIGHT, EXHAUSTED, HE WOULD RETURN TO HIS SLEEPING WIFE WHOSE EYES HAD GROWN GLASSY AND WHOSE LIPS HAD SEALD IN A TIGHT LINE AND WHO SAT AND STROKED THE EMPTY CARRIAGE HOOD AFTER HOUR...



DID YOU BRING ME MY BARK, DANIEL?
NO, TERESA, BUT I WILL. YOU WILL WAIT.

A YEAR PASSED. DANIEL TOOK A MENIAL JOB AT NIGHT BEHIND LUNCH DELIVERY WITH HIS BARK. DURING THE DAY, WEARILY HE THROG THE CITY STREETS... LOOKING, LOOKING...



A LOVELY BABE, LARRY.
KEEP YOUR HANDS OFF HIM...

ONE DAY TERESA RODE FROM HER WINDOW, SOMETHING HAD "GROWN" HEAVY. SHE FELT QUEASINESS AND DROVE TO THE CURB... TO THE LINE OF HASTY BENTED TRASH CANS...



MY BARK!

IN THE EVENING, WHEN DANIEL RETURNED FROM ANOTHER OF HIS FRUITLESS TOURS OF THE VAST CITY, HE FOUND TERESA CRADLING HER "BARK" IN HER ARMS.



SEE, DANIEL? SEE? YOU WERE RIGHT! THEY BROUGHT MY BARK BACK TO ME!

THE DOCTOR SHOOK HIS HEAD. HE TOOK DANIEL ASIDE.



YOU MUST HAVE ANOTHER BARK, DANIEL. SHE MUST BE MADE TO FORGET THIS TRAGEDY. OTHERWISE... WELL, SHE WILL LOSE HER MIND COMPLETELY.
BUT, DOCTOR? YOU SAID IT YOURSELF. SHE CANNOT HAVE ANY MORE.

IT WAS A SOILED, TORN, DISCARDED PAID-DOLL... A CHILD'S CAST-OFF TOY THAT TERESA CRADLED LOVINGLY...

THE PEOPLE AT THE ADOPTION AGENCY SHOOK THEIR HEADS...



AND ONE NIGHT, AT HIS JOB, DANIEL LEARNED...



DANIEL'S SEARCHING CARRIED HIM FAR FROM THE TOWNMENTS, TO TREE-LINED STREETS WITH QUIET FRESHLY-PAINTED HOUSES. ONE DAY, AT HIS WIFE'S END, HE SPIED A *CARRIAGE* SITTING BEFORE ONE OF THESE HOUSES...



THE LITTLE BOY INSIDE THE CARRIAGE COOED UP AT HIM SOFTLY. TEARS FILLED DANIEL'S EYES...



DANIEL LOOKED AT THE GRINNING BABY AND THOUGHT OF HIS BELOVED TERRICA... AND SUDDENLY HE **SNATCHED THE CHILD FROM THE CARRIAGE...**



WHY NOT? THEY'VE TAKEN HIS CHILD... HE'D TAKE **SOMEONE ELSE'S**. DANIEL CRADLED THE CHILD, HEARING A SHRILL SCREAM RINGED UP THE TREE-LINED STREET BEHIND HIM...



STOP HIM! STOP HIM!
HE STOLE MY BABY!

DOORS FLEW OPEN... THE MOTHER'S SCREAMS SUCKED PEOPLE FROM THEIR HOMES... ANGRY MEN, HORRIFIED WOMEN, YOUNG STRONG BOYS, DANIEL RAN



THERE HE GOES!
AFTER HIM!
KID-NAPPER!

HEAVY FOOTSTEPS...HORSE SHOUTS OF ANGER... DROPPED... THUNDER... ANGRY... TERRIFIED... THIS WAY... THAT WAY... THEN SUDDENLY FOUND HIMSELF SURROUNDED



KICKING, STAMPING, PUNNELING... A **STICK** WHITELY SNITCHED AND APPLIED, A **POCK, FISTS, KNEES**... ANGRY, ANGRY... RAINED DOWN UPON DANIEL... AND HE LAY BACK DENSELY UNTIL HIS LIFE EBBED AND FADED FROM THIS SORROWLESS WORLD...



HE'S DEAD!
TERRA... SHE'S DEERED HIM RIGHT!
MY BASTY... SO... MY BASTY

ANGRY HANDS REACHED OUT...SNATCHING THE BABY CRADLING... SHOCKED... FADING... HIS FACE, HIS KIDS, KNOCKING HIM TO THE GROUND...



KIDNAPPER!
WE'LL TEACH YOU!
HERE! LET ME AT HIM...

AND THE MOTHER WHO **COULD** AFFORD THE PRICE CRADLED HER INFANT SON IN HER ARMS AND KISSED HIS CHEEKS, HIS HAIRS, THE PALM WITH THE STRANGE BIRTH-MARK THAT LOOKED LIKE A SLOT OF WRITING INK



THEY ALMOST TOOK YOU AWAY FROM ME, MY BASTY!

FALL GUY

THE POLICE STATION SHOOKED TO A STOP FAR BELOW IN THE STREET CANYON, ECHOING OFF THE DARK SILENT BUILDINGS. DANNY LEAPED OVER THE PARAPET, SPRINGING. IN A FEW MINUTES THEY'D BE COMING UP AFTER HIM, SHAKING HIM WITH THEIR SHINY HANDCUFFS, AND DRAGGING HIM BACK TO THE HELL HOLE WHERE HE'D SPENT TEN MISERABLE YEARS... *BACK TO FUSION*. WELL, HE'D HAVE NONE OF THAT. DANNY SHOOK HIS HEAD, THE FLASHING RED LIGHT FROM THE BAR AND GRILL SIGN THAT RAN VERTICALLY BY THE EDGE OF THE TOWNHOMES REFLECTING ON HIS PERSPICUOUS FACE. HE SCREAMED DOWN AT THE UNIFORMED FIGURES POURING FROM THE ISOLATED CARS...

NOT ME, COPPERHEAD! YOU'LL NEVER TAKE ME BACK! NEVER!



DANNY CLIMBED ONTO THE PARAPET. SOMEONE IN THE STREET BELOW POINTED UP AT DANNY'S HIGH ILLUMINATED FIGURE, OUTLINED AGAINST THE NIGHT SKY AND SHOUTED...



DANNY LOOKED DOWN AT THE GATHERING SEA OF UPTURNED FACES. THE SIGN, RUNNING AWAY DOWN THE BUILDING FACE, FLASHED ON AND OFF... FIRST BATHING HIM IN ITS RED-ORANGE LIGHT, THEN SPREADING HIM INTO BLACKNESS. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD...



DANNY STOOD THERE, FEELING CRAZILY. HE THOUGHT OF HELEN, SMILING PAINTFULLY IN THE CAR BELOW, WITH THE **ARRO GASH** DELIVERING HER ONCE LOVELY FACE IN ONE JAWED CRIMSON SWEAR...



...AND HE THOUGHT OF THE MONEY. **NINETY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS**. WAITING QUIETLY IN THAT SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX IN THE BANK VAULT... WAITING... WAITING.



WAITING FOR WHOM? DANNY SHOOKED. WHAT WAS THAT NAME? IF ONLY HE'D BEEN ABLE TO REMEMBER THAT NAME. THE NAME HE'D GIVEN THEM WHEN HE'D RENTED THE ROOM... ALL THIS WOULDN'T HAVE HAPPENED! DANNY LOOKED AROUND, FIGURES WERE SPILLING OUT ONTO THE ROOF NOW...



HOLD IT, JARDEN!

DON'T BE A POOL, DANNY.

STAY AWAY, COPPER.

DANNY MADE A MOVEMENT AS IF TO JUMP. THE POLICEMEN STOPPED COMING...

TAKE ONE MORE STEP TOWARD ME AND DOWN I GO, COPPER.

GO AHEAD, SUGGESTION! YOU'LL SAVE THE STATE A LOT OF MONEY.



NINETY-THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS! IT WAS A LOT OF MONEY. DANNY STOOD THERE IN THE FLASHING LIGHT OF THE CAR'S NEON SIGN, REMEMBERING WHY HE'D NEEDED SO MUCH MONEY...

MARRY HIM, DANNY? DON'T HE KILL! YOU HAVEN'T A DIME! WHEN I MARRY, I'LL BE TO SOMEODY WITH PLENTY OF DOLLAR!

I'LL GET DOWN, HELEN. HONEST.



DANNY REMEMBERED HOW HELEN HAD LAUGHED AT HIM...

YOU... GET DOWN? DON'T BE RIDICULOUS! WHERE CAN A TWO-BIT HOTEL CLEAR OUT THE KIND OF COUGH I WANT? WHERE COULD YOU GET... SAY, ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS?

I'LL GET IT, HELEN. YOU'LL SEE. THEN, WILL YOU MARRY ME?



NOW SHE'D SMILED AT HIM, TAPPING HIS CHEEK...

SAY, IT'S MARRY ANYBODY WITH A HUNDRED GRAND ANYBODY? EVEN YOU?

I LOVE YOU, HELEN. I LOVE YOU SO MUCH I'D DO ANYBODY FOR YOU.



DANNY TESTERED ON THE HARPNET THE UNIFORMED PEPPER MOVED CAUTIOUSLY TOWARD HIM...



THE DAPPER GUY'D BEEN A DEALER IN DIAMONDS. HE'D COME TO TOWN TO MAKE SOME PURCHASES FOR CLIENTS. DANNY PUT THE BAG INTO THE HOTEL SAFE...



DANNY REMEMBERED NOW HE'D TAKEN THE BAG FROM THE SAFE AND RUSHED ACROSS TOWN TO A BANK...



DANNY REMEMBERED THE DAY THE DAPPER-LOOKING GUY HAD COME INTO THE HOTEL WITH THE LITTLE BLACK BAG TUCKED IN HIS ARM...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D TAKEN THE BAG, AND HOW HE'D ALMOST DROPPED IT, AS THE DAPPER GUY ANNOUNCED...



DANNY'D SMILED, THINKING OF HELEN... BEAUTIFUL, DEGRADABLE HELEN...



THAT WAS IT. THAT WAS THE ONLY THING DANNY COULD NOT REMEMBER NOW. HE'D GIVEN A FALSE NAME SO THAT WHEN AND IF HE WERE CAUGHT, THE MONEY WOULD BE SAFE... BASTARD...



THEN HE'D GO TO HELEN.

YOU SAID YOUR SAFETY
WAS IF I GOT A HUNDRED
THOUSAND, WELL, I'VE
GOT IT.

WHAT? I
MILKED IT,
DANNY. I'M
NOT IN THE
MOOD FOR
JOKE'S.

THIS IS NO JOKE,
HELEN. I STOLE
ONE HUNDRED
THOUSAND DOL-
LARS AND I AM IT
IN A SAFETY DEPOSIT
BOX UNDER A PHONY
NAME.

AND YOU
EXPECT ME TO
BELIEVE THAT
STORY?

YOU'LL BELIEVE IT WHEN
THE COPS START LOOKING
FOR ME, HELEN. JUST
PROMISE ME ONE
THING...

SURE,
DANNY.
ANY-
THING.

PROMISE ME YOU'LL WAIT
FOR ME. THEY'LL BASTON
GUP WITH ME AND I'LL
HAVE TO DO SOME TIME.
PROMISE ME YOU'LL WAIT
TILL I GET OUT.

SURE,
DANNY.
SURE?

DANNY REMEMBERED THE COPS
COMING TO HIS ROOM...

GET YOUR
DOGS,
JENSEN.

THERE'S A LITTLE MAT-
TER OF A HUNDRED
THOUSAND MARKS FROM
A HOTEL SAFE WE'D
LIKE TO TALK OVER WITH
YOU.

...THEIR INCESSANT QUESTIONING...

WHAT DID YOU
DO WITH THE
MONEY, JENSEN?

TELL US WHERE
YOU HIDE IT.
DANNY?
FOR-
GOT, COOPER?



HE SENTENCED...

BECAUSE YOU HAD PERSISTENTLY
REFUSED TO SPEAK WHERE YOU
HAD HIDDEN THE MONEY YOU
STOLE, I SENTENCE YOU TO THE
MAXIMUM JAIL TERM ALLOWED
BY LAW, DANIEL JENSEN... 18
YEARS IN THE STATE
PENITENTIARY...

...AND DANNY REMEMBERED HELEN'S
LAST MOMENTS WITH HIM BEFORE
HE WAS TAKEN AWAY.

TELL ME THE
NAME, DANNY.
THE NAME YOU
USED WHEN
YOU RENTED
THE BOX.

DO YOU HEAR, YOU
BASTARD FOR ME. WITH
TIME OFF FOR
GOOD BEHAVIOR,
I'LL BE OUT IN TEN
YEARS. THEN IT'LL BE
GLOVES FOR US.

DANNY STOOD ON THE PARAPET...

BETTER COME
DOWN, DANNY.

STAY BACK,
COOPER. STAY
BACK...



DANNY REMEMBERED THOSE TERRIBLE YEARS IN JAIL, COUNTING THE ENDLESS DAYS AND SAYING THE NAME OVER AND OVER IN HIS MIND... THE NAME HE'D USED WHEN HE'D RENTED THE SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX... THE NAME HE'D FORGOTTEN...

BRAD GILBERT...
BRAD GILBERT...



FOR TEN YEARS, DANNY'D WAITED FOR THAT MOMENT. HELEN WAS OUT THERE... OUTSIDE THE GATES... WAITING FOR HIM...



DANNY! LET'S GO, DANNY! LET'S PICK UP THE DOWN AND HEAD FOR MEXICO!

HE REMEMBERED THE DRIVE BACK TO TOWN... TO THE BANK...



YES, SIR? I RENTED A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX SEVERAL YEARS AGO. I PAID FOR IT IN ADVANCE. IT'S LIKE TO HAVE IT OPENED.

HE REMEMBERED HOW THE BANK CLERK HAD HANDED HIM THE FORM...



OF COURSE, SIR. JUST SIGN YOUR NAME!

IT WAS DRASTIC! EVERY DAY FOR TEN YEARS HE'D SAID THAT NAME TO HIMSELF. BUT THERE, IN THE BANK, WITH THE CLERK WAITING AND HELEN WAITING AND THE DOTTED LINE ON THE FORM WAITING, DANNY'D DRAWN A BLANK... A COMPLETE LOSS OF MEMORY.



DANNY! SIGN THE NAME! THE NAME YOU USED!

I... OH, MY GOD! I CAN'T REMEMBER IT!

DANNY REMEMBERED HOW HELEN HAD PLEADED WITH HIM.



THINK, DANNY! THINK! WHAT DID IT SOUND LIKE? WAS IT A COMMON NAME? A BALL-PLAYER, A...

SIGN UP, HELEN. YOUR NAME, SIR. IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG?

AND THEN, THAT LONG AWAITED DAY... THE DAY THE PRISON GATES SWUNG OPEN AND HE PASSED THROUGH THEM, A FREE MAN...

GOOD LUCK, DANNY!

THANKS, WARDEN



DANNY'D MADE A LAMB FOLLER...

I'LL BE BACK.
I FORGOT SOME
IMPORTANT
PAPERS THAT
I WANT TO PUT
IN...

OF COURSE,
DAN.



THEY'D WALKED FOR HOURS... HE
AND HELEN... SHE, PRODDING HIM,
QUESTIONING, REWALTING, ALMOST
SCREAMING AT TIMES... AND HE,
RACKING HIS TORTURED BRAIN...

FOR GOD'S SAKE,
DANNY! HOW COULD
YOU FORGET ANY-
THING AS IMPORTANT
AS THAT? WAS IT
SMITH, JONES?
DANIELS?
THINK!

NO! NO!
LAY OFF
ME, WILL
YOU!



THEY'D ENDED UP TONIGHT UNDER
THE BAR-BE-GRILL SIGN...

I'M HUNGRY!

LET'S GO
IN HERE.



THEY'D SAT IN THE BAR AND HELEN'S TUNED...

TEN YEARS I'VE WASTED...
WAITING FOR A DUMB CREEP!
TO FORGET THE NAME HE
USED WHEN HE WAS ONE
HUNDRED GRAND!

FOR CRYIN' OUT
LOUD, HELEN.
HAVE SOME PITY
ON ME. I'M DYING



DANNY REMEMBERED HOW SHE'D SCREAMED...

MAKE PITY ON FORN? WHAT ABOUT ME??
WHAT ABOUT ALL THE CHANCES I TOSSED
UP, WAITING FOR YOU... WAITING FOR YOU
TO GET OUT SO I COULD SET MY HANDS
ON THAT DUCK?? I NEVER GAVE A
HOOF ABOUT YOU. IT WAS THE
DOWN... THE DOWN...

HELEN



LOOK AT ME! I'M ALMOST
FORTY! WHAT CHANCE
HAVE I GOT TO FIND
ANOTHER BUCKER? YOU
WERE IT! AND NOW YOU
PULL A ROTTEN TRICK
LIKE THIS! THINK OF
THAT NAME, DANNY.
THINK!

SHUT
UP,
HELEN!

I WON'T SHUT UP!
MAKE ME! MAKE
ME SHUT UP,
YOU DAMN
CREEP!

I SAID,
SHUT UP,
HELEN!



AND DANNY REMEMBERED PLODDING UP
THE GRILLED STEAK KNIFE.

MAKE ME, YOU LAMB-
BRAINED IDIOT...
YOU, FORN...
DANNY!



DANNY GIGGLED ON THE PARAPET AS HE REMEMBERED SLASHING OUT AT HELEN...SLICING ACROSS HER JAWING MOUTH...AND THE BLOOD SPURTING, AS THE SAW-TOOTHED KNIFE CUT DEEP...

STAND BACK, COPPER!

THEY'S DEAD, DANNY! SHE SAID SOMETHING ABOUT A NAME BEFORE SHE DIED! WHAT NAME?



THE LIGHT FROM THE FLASHING NEON SIGN COLORED DANNY'S FACE INTO A SATURATE MASS...

THERE'S A HUNDRED DOLLARS IN A SAFETY DEPOSIT BOX, COPPER. I HIDE IT UNDER A FRONT NAME, AND I FORGET THE NAME. YOU HEAR? I FORGET IT!

BETTER COME DOWN, DANNY!



DANNY SCREAMED...

NOT ME, COPPER! I HAVN'T GOT NOTHING LEFT TO LIVE FOR, NO NAME... NO DOLLARS... NO MORE...



DANNY LEAPED, HIS SCREAM DROPPED DOWN INTO THE STREET! CANYON...HE SMASHED AGAINST THE SIGN, CLUTTERING AT THE NEON LETTERS, RIPPING THEM AWAY AS HE PLUNGED...



NEON TUBES EXPLODED...HISSED...SPLINTERED AS HE FELL AGAINST THEM...DOWN...DOWN...



...AND JUST BEFORE HIS BODY LEFT HIM...AND HIS LIFE SLIPPED AWAY AS HE LAY CRUSHED AND BROKEN ON THE SIDEWALK BELOW THE SIGN, DANNY LOOKED UP AND SAW THE WORK HIS FALLING BODY HAD DONE...



THERE, CURLED IN FLASHING ORANGE AGAINST THE BLACK NIGHT, WAS THE NAME DANNY'D FORGOTTEN.

THE END...

FANTASTIC 1950s EC COMICS!



NO. 13
SEPT

SHOCK



200
2TH
CANADA

SUSPENSTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**



ONLY SKIN-DEEP

SHE STOOD IN THE CENTER OF THE SUNLIGHT-FILLED HOSPITAL ROOM, SMILING AT HIM, HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE WAS A TRING OF RADIANT BEAUTY, A VENUS IN MODE IN DISGUISE, SOMEWHERE, DEEP INSIDE HIM, A MEMORY STIRRED, ALMOST CAME TO LIFE, THEN FLED AGAIN. SHE WAS PART OF IT, ALL RIGHT... PART OF THE PART HE COULDN'T REMEMBER. HE STARED AT HER THROUGH THE NARROW SLITS IN THE BANDAGES THAT SHROUDED HIS FACE. AS THE DOCTOR CLOSED THE DOOR BEHIND HIM, LEAVING THEM ALONE, SHE WHISPERED...

YOU'LL REMEMBER, DARLING. I'LL MAKE YOU REMEMBER. THE DOCTOR SAYS IT'S TEMPORARY AMNESIA... THAT YOU CAN COME OUT OF IT... ANYTIME...

WHO... WHO ARE YOU? YOU LOOK FAMILIAR... AND YET...



SHE CROSSED THE ROOM TO HIS BED, TOOK HIS HAND IN HER'S, AND HER SOFT RED LIPS MET HIS...

I'M GLORIA, SWEET. GLORIA ANDERS! WE WERE IN LOVE, TRY TO REMEMBER! YOU'VE FORGOTTEN SINGLES. WE MET SIX MONTHS AGO. ONLY IT WAS SO IMPOSSIBLE I WAS MARRIED.

MARRIED? THEN YOUR HUSBAND...



SHE MOOVED, LOOKING AROUND...

YES, MY HUSBAND WAS CHARLES ANDERS. HE WAS THE ONE WHO DIED IN THE ACCIDENT... THE ACCIDENT THAT CAUSED YOUR AMNESIA. WE KILLED HIM, BOB... YOU AND I. WE MURDERED CHARLES SO THAT WE COULD HAVE HIS INSURANCE... SO THAT WE COULD BE FORTUNATE...

KILLED HIM? I DON'T REMEMBER MY FACE... IT WAS BURNED, THEY SAID.



SHE STROKED HIS HAIR SOFTLY,
CRADLING HIS HEAD AGAINST HER

SOMETHING WENT
WRONG, DEAREST,
BUT THEY SAY YOU'LL
BE ALL RIGHT. I HAVE
THEM FIXTURES. THEY
RECONSTRUCTED YOUR
FACE WITH PLASTIC
SURGERY.

ROBERT
SIGHED.
I... I JUST
CAN'T
REMEM-
BER.

SHE LOOKED AT HIM NERVOUSLY,
AND HE KNEW THAT HE'D LOVED
THIS WOMAN. HIS HEART TOLD HIM.

IN A LITTLE WHILE,
THEY'RE GOING TO
REMOVE YOUR BAND-
AGES... THEN, YOU'RE
COMING HOME...
WITH ME.

IT'S
LIKE
THAT,
GLORIA.

THERE WAS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.
THE DOCTOR CAME IN, SMILING.

WELL, MR. BICKLES,
READY FOR THE
UNVEILING?

READY,
DOC.

THE BANDAGES UNWOUND, LIKE TAPES FROM A CHILD'S
MYTALE... AROUND AND AROUND...UNTIL HE COULD FEEL
THE SUNLIGHT ON HIS FACE...

THERE
WE ARE...

OH, DOCTOR! IT'S
PERFECT! PERFECT!
YOU CAN HARDLY TELL
HE'S BEEN IN AN ACCIDENT.

A MINUTE!
GIVE ME A
MIRROR!

HE STARED AT HIMSELF IN THE LITTLE HAND MIRROR
GLORIA'D FISHED FROM HER BAG. THE DOCTOR WHEED
UP AN ASSORTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHS...

CAME TO CHECK
AGAINST THESE.
MR. BICKLES' MRS.
ANDERS SUPPLIED
UP WITH THEM.

I CAN SEE, DOCTOR,
YOU DID A FINE JOB.
IT'S JUST THAT...
WELL... IT'S LIKE
SEEING YOUR
FACE FOR THE
FIRST TIME.

IS HE
FREE
TO GO
NOW,
DOCTOR?

OF COURSE... ER...
YOU'LL SEE THAT
HE TAKES IT EASY
FOR A WHILE, MRS.
ANDERS.

CERTAINLY, DOCTOR.
SON, I'LL WAIT OUTSIDE
TILL YOU'RE DRESSED.

RIGHT!

GLORIA WENT OUT INTO THE HALL. THE DOCTOR
NOTICED TO A CLOSET...

YOU'LL FIND ALL OF YOUR
CLOTHES IN THERE, MR. BICKLES.
MRS. ANDERS HAD THEM SENT
OVER. YOU'LL ALSO FIND A BOX
WITH THE CHANGED REMAINS
OF YOUR PERSONAL BELONGINGS.
YOUR WALLET, KEYS... THAT WE
FOUND IN YOUR POCKET. THE SAT
YOU WORE, OF COURSE WAS TURNED.

THANKS, DOC.
ER... THIS IS ALL
VERY IMPER-
FECT, BUT...
WELL... JUST
WHO IS MRS.
ANDERS?

MR. ANDERS, THE MAN WHO *DIED* IN THE ACCIDENT, WAS A *VERY CLOSE* FRIEND OF YOURS, MR. SORLE. HIS WIDOW, MRS. ANDERS, HAS BEEN *MOST KIND*. SHE IS *VERY CONCERNED* ABOUT YOU. YOU'RE *VERY LUCKY*!

I... I GUESS I AM?

GLORIA WAS WAITING FOR HIM IN THE HALL. SHE LED HIM OUT OF THE HOSPITAL AND INTO THE STREET TO A WAITING CAR...

LIVE IT, HONEY! IT'S NEW. IT'S ALL YOURS! CHARLES'S INSURANCE MONEY PAID FOR IT. DO YOU THINK YOU CAN DRIVE IT?

I'LL TRY, JUST TELL ME WHERE TO GO...

SHE SAT BESIDE HIM AS HE GUIDED THE NEW CAR OUT OF THE CITY...

YOU SAY WE *KILLED* YOUR HUSBAND?

WELL, TO BE PRECISE, YOU KILLED HIM, BUT LET'S NOT *TALK* ABOUT THAT NOW, BEH.



SHE SHOOKLED UP WARILY AGAINST HIM, BRUSHING HER LIPS AGAINST HIS CHEEK...

LET'S TALK ABOUT *BEH*... WHAT WE'LL BE *DOING* IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS... WEEKS... MONTHS... YEARS...

TO... *LIVE* TO TALK ABOUT IT, GLORIA. IT'S IMPORTANT. I'VE GOT TO *KNOW* I'VE GOT TO *REMEMBER*.



GLORIA BEGAN. AS SHE SPOKE, HE TRIED TO PICTURE THE SCENE, TRIED TO RECALL IT... TRIED TO PULL IT FROM BEHIND THE BLACK CURTAIN THAT HUNG OVER HIS PAST...

YOU AND CHARLES BELONGED TO THE SAME CLUB. YOU WERE *VERY GOOD FRIENDS*. ABOUT *SIX MONTHS AGO*, CHARLES INVITED YOU HOME... FOR DINNER...



IT WAS THE *FIRST TIME* WE'D MET. WE FELL IN LOVE ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. CHARLES NEVER *THINK* HE WAS *COMPLETELY FOOL*. HE SAW EACH OTHER OFTEN AFTER THAT... EVERY CHANCE WE COULD. ONE DAY, WHEN CHARLES WAS OUT OF TOWN, I CALLED YOU... ASKED YOU TO COME TO THE HOUSE...

THIS IS *STAFF*, GLORIA. WHAT IF SOMEONE SHOULD SEE ME HERE?

NO ONE WILL SEE YOU, AND CHARLES IS OUT OF TOWN. WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE. *KISS ME*...



THAT WAS THE DAY I TOLD YOU MY PLAN...

MURDER HIM, GLORIA? BUT WE'D BE CAUGHT?

NONSENSE! I'VE THOUGHT IT ALL OUT. NOW HERE'S WHAT YOU DO. HAVE SOME *EXCUSE* TO HAVE HIM DRIVE YOU OUT TO THE CLUB NEXT WEEK. TELL HIM YOUR CAR IS BEING REPAIRED.



IT WAS A SIMPLE PLAN...

THEN, WHEN YOU GET TO THE TURN IN THE ROAD BY THE DEEP RAVINE... MAKE HIM STOP. KNOCK HIM UNCONSCIOUS... GET OUT... PUSH THE CAR OVER INTO THE RAVINE... AND THEN, TO DESTROY ANY EVIDENCE, SET FIRE TO THE CAR.



...AND IT HAD A DOUBLE REWARD...

CHARLES CARRIES A HOME INSURANCE POLICY, WITH DOUBLE INDemnITY. WE'LL BE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE. WE'LL BE RID OF HIM... AND... WE'LL BE RICH.



YOU WERE A LITTLE NASTY, BUT I FORGAVE YOU...

DARLING... IT COULD BE LIKE THIS ALWAYS... NOT JUST THESE FEW STOLEN MOMENTS. SAY YOU'LL DO IT!



GLORIA BRUSHES

THAT'S IT? YOU TOOK OVER FROM THERE? THE FOLLOWING WEEK, YOU CALLED... MADE THE APPOINTMENT... AND CHARLES LEFT TO DRIVE YOU OUT. THAT'S ALL I KNEW UNTIL I HEARD ABOUT THE WRECK AND LEARNED THAT YOU WERE IN IT, FOR?

I... I CAN'T SEEM TO RECALL. PERHAPS WHEN I GET FIRE TO THE CAR, THE BAD TANK...



HE SUDDENLY SHOUTED, HIS EYES WIDE...

THAT'S IT, GLORIA! I REMEMBER SOMETHING! I REMEMBER THE BAD TANK EXPLODING!

SEE, HONEY? SEE? IT'LL ALL COME BACK... SOON.



GLORIA GUIDED HIM TO A JUSTICE OF THE PEACE... AND AFTER THE WEDDING CEREMONY, THEY DROVE ON TO A DESERTED CANYON, DEEP IN THE WOODS...

I PREFERRED THIS PLACE SO WE'D BE ALONE, AND YOU'D HAVE PEACE AND QUIET.

IT'S A LOVELY PLACE, GLORIA.



THAT EVENING, THEY SAT CONTENTEDLY, BEFORE A ROARING FIRE.

YOU KNOW, GLORIA... WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU THIS MORNING, I KNEW I'D LOVED YOU BACK THEN... BACK IN MY PAST. I LOVE YOU NOW.

WOW, DARLING... IT WAS WORTH IT... ALL OF IT... JUST FOR THIS DAY OF REUNION... LET ALONE ALL OF THE YEARS... AHEAD.



NIGHT SETTLED AROUND THE CABIN. HE LAY AWAKE, LISTENING TO HER QUIET BREATHING, INHALEING HER SOFT PUFFS...

I... I CAN'T REMEMBER ANY OF THE INCIDENTS SHE TOLD ME EXCEPT FOR THAT EXPLOSION. BUT... WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?! I LOVE HER. I KNOW THAT! WHAT WE'VE DONE IS WRONG, BUT WHAT CAN I DO? IF I HAVE MYSELF UP TO THE POLICE, SHE'D BE PUNISHED TOO!



HE DOES YARNING...

I NEED A CIGARETTE. THAT'S WHAT I NEED.



HE MOVED ACROSS THE DARKENED ROOM TOWARD THE DOORWAY...



HE FLUNG...THE SCATTER-HAS BRIDGING OUT FROM UNDER HIM. AS HE FELL, HE STRUCK HIS HEAD...



GLORIA SAT UP, WIDE-EYED...

BOBBY? THAT FOOT ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?



HE STOOD OVER HER BED, HIS HANDS TENSED LIKE HISS CLAWS...



I'M... ALL RIGHT... NOW... GLORIA!

BOBBY? I EEE...

THE CLAW THOT DOWNWARD, GRIPPING GLORIA'S THIN WHITE NECK, CUTTING OFF HER SHRIEL SCREAM... CUTTING OFF HER AIR... CUTTING OFF HER LIFE...



D-D-D-A... A... A... A...

HE SAT WITH HIS HEAD BOWED UNDER THE BRILLIANT OVERHEAD LIGHT. THEY STOOD AROUND HIM, IN THE SHADOWS...THE DETECTIVES...THE DOCTOR...

BUT, WHY DID YOU KILL HER, SICKLEST EVEN IF YOUR MIMICRY DID COME BACK... WHY KILL HER?

IT WAS JUST LIKE SEEING A MOVIE! I STRUCK MY HEAD AND IT FLASHED BEFORE MY EYES. I SAW IT ALL...



"I SAW GLORIA AND BOB FROM AFAR... LIKE AN ONLOOKER PEERING THROUGH A SHADOE..."

CHARLES CARRIES A HOME INSURANCE POLICY WITH DOUBLE INDemnITY. WE'LL BE KILLING TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE.



"I SAW CHARLES LET HIMSELF OUT, QUIETLY, AS..."

EARLIER... IT COULD BE LIKE THIS ALWAYS. NOT JUST THESE FEW STOLEN MOMENTS, SAY YOU'LL DO IT!

SURE!



"AND I SAW HIM ANSWERING THE PHONE A WEEK LATER..."

CHARLIE? THIS IS BOB SICKLES, CAN YOU DO ME A FAVOR, CHARLIE?

SURE, BOB! WHAT IS IT?



"I SAW CHARLES ANDERS WALK INTO A TRAP, OBVIOUSLY..."

IT'S REAL SWEET OF YOU TO DO THIS ON SUCH SHORT NOTICE, CHARLIE, BUT I MUST GET MY GLASS. I'VE GOT AN IMPORTANT GAME TOMORROW AT MY CLIENT'S HOUSE...

THINK NOTHING OF IT, BOB, GLAD TO DO IT...



"AND THEN I SAW WHY..."

YOU'RE... YOU'RE STOPPING, CHARLIE? WHAT'S... WORDS?

SURPRISED, BOB? I KNEW YOU WOULD BE, WE HADN'T REACHED THE TURN, YET, HAVE WE? GET OUT? THIS IS A JUMP?



I SAW IT ALL, AS THOUGH I WERE WATCHING A TV SHOW. I SAW CHARLES FORGE BOB OUT OF THE CAR, AND DEMAND...

TAKE OFF YOUR CLOTHES, BOB.

WHAT? THIS, CHARLIE? WHAT'S THE IDEA?



I HEARD THEIR ANGRY WORDS...

I OVERHEARD YOUR PLAN TO KILL ME NOW, FORDS AND MY LOVING WIFE'S MOLL. I AM GOING TO DIE... SHE'LL FIND IT ONLY IT WILL BE FOR WITH MY IDENTIFICATION...



AND WON'T SHE BE SURPRISED WHEN I SHOW UP, INSTEAD OF FORD, AFTER THE INSURANCE COMPANY HAS PAID OFF.

IT WAS ALL HER IDEA, CHARLIE? REALLY? I... I...



OH, DON'T WORRY, BOB, SHE WON'T LIVE LONG EITHER. AND AFTER I KILL HER, I'M GOING TO GIVE MYSELF UP TO THE POLICE.



I WATCHED THEM EXCHANGE CLOTHES AND IDENTIFICATION. THEN I SAW CHARLES LIFT THE GUN MULET AND BRING IT DOWN ON BOB'S HEAD.



THE VICTIM BECAME THE VICTIM. I SAW CHARLES BRING BOB'S UNCONSCIOUS BODY BACK INTO THE CAR.



I SAW THE CAR DRIVE TO THE EDGE OF THE RAVINE. SAW CHARLES GET OUT.



... SAW THE CAR GO OVER AND OVER WITH BOB'S BODY INSIDE. DRESSED IN CHARLES'S CLOTHES, WITH CHARLES'S IDENTIFICATION...



"I SAW CHARLES SCURRY DOWN INTO THE BAYNE TOWARD THE SMASHED CAR... WATCHED HIM STRIKE A MATCH."



"WATCHED HIM TOSS IT TOWARD THE GASOLINE- SOAKED WHEEL... HEARD THE EAR-SPLITTING EXPLOSION THAT FOLLOWED."



"... SAW THE SADOR SHED OF PLANE THAT SHOT ALONG THE SPILLED GASOLINE STREAM BEFORE CHARLES, ENVELOPING HIM... BURNING... SCORCHING... CHARRING."



HE SAT WITH HIS HEAD BOWED UNDER THE BRILLIANT OVERHEAD LIGHT. THEY STOOD AROUND HIM, BACK IN THE SHADOWS... THE DETECTIVES... THE DOCTOR...

I SAW IT ALL, IN THAT FLASH, WHEN I STRUCK MY HEAD, AND MY MEMORY RETURNED...

DO YOU KILLED HER?



YES... WHAT ALICIA DIDN'T KNOW, AND WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW, AND WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW, UNTIL I STRUCK MY HEAD... WAS



... BOB SHOLES DIED IN THAT BURNING CAR, I KILLED HIM! SINCE YOU FOUND MY IDENTIFICATION ON HIS BODY, YOU NATURALLY THOUGHT IT WAS ME. AND...



AND SINCE YOU FOUND BOB SHOLES' IDENTIFICATION ON MY BURNED BODY, YOU NATURALLY THOUGHT I WAS BOB SHOLES. WHEN YOU CONTACTED MY WIFE SHE BROUGHT HIS PHOTOGRAPHS AND THE DOC GAVE ME HIS FACE! BUT I THINK, AS I WAS KILLED AND NEARLY DEAD, I REALIZED I WAS REALLY HER HUSBAND, CHARLES ANDERS!



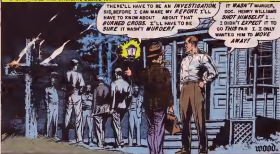
THE END

BLOOD-BROTHERS

A LAST FAINT WHISP OF SMOKE CURLED UPWARD FROM THE BLACKENED AND CHARRED CROSS THAT STILL STOOD GROTESQUELY UPON THE BURNED LAWN AS THEY BROUGHT THE BODY OUT. OLD DOC FALK, THE CORONER WHO HAD DRIVEN OVER FROM THE COUNTY SEAT TO SIGN THE DEATH CERTIFICATE, WATCHED AS THE DRAPED STRETCHER WAS MOVED THROUGH THE SAPIPH SILENT CROWD TO THE MORGUE WAGON. HE SHOOK HIS HEAD. HE LOOKED UP AT THE GRIM FACED MAN STANDING BESIDE HIM.

THERE'LL HAVE TO BE AN INVESTIGATION, SIB, BEFORE I CAN MAKE MY REPORT. I'LL HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT ABOUT THAT BURNED CROSS. I'LL HAVE TO BE SURE IT WASN'T MURDER!

IT WASN'T MURDER, DOC. HENRY WILLIAMS SHOT HIMSELF! I... I DIDN'T EXPECT IT TO GO THIS FAR. I. I ONLY WANTED HIM TO MOVE AWAY!



YOU WANTED HIM TO MOVE AWAY, BUT WHY? I THOUGHT YOU TWO WERE SUCH GOOD FRIENDS. SNAKES, WHEN I WAS APPOINTED CORONER AND MOVED OVER TO THE COUNTY SEAT, YOU AND HENRY WERE LIKE...

I FOUND OUT A FEW THINGS SINCE THEN, DOC. THINGS I DON'T LIKE. THINGS THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE...



THE MORGUE WAGON WHEELED SEATS AND ROARED OFF. THE CROWD BEGAN TO BREAK UP. DOC FALK STUDIED THE GRIM FACED MAN BESIDE HIM.

YOU BETTER TELL ME ABOUT IT, SIB. IT'LL ALL COME OUT AT THE ANGST, ANYWAY.

WELL, DOC, IT ALL BEGAN WHEN JED MULTAM PUT HIS HOUSE UP FOR SALE. JED LIVES OVER THERE, ACROSS THE STREET...



"JOE'D HAD THE PLUCK FOR THE MARKET FOR A FEW MONTHS WHEN A FLUMOR STARTED. ELLA, MY WIFE, HEARD IT FROM MR. MORGAN AND SHE TOLD ME."

THAT'S **RIGHT** AND HE'S **CONSIDERING** IT, TOO! THEY OFFERED HIM A **GOOD PRICE**...

WE CAN'T LET THAT **HAPPEN**, ELLA. WE JUST CAN'T.



"THAT NIGHT, I WENT NEXT DOOR TO MCE HENRY. I TOLD HIM THE NEWS."

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT **JOE MARTIN**, HENRY? HE'S HAD AN OFFER TO **BUY HIS PLACE**...

WHY THAT'S **SWELL!** HE'S BEEN **ANXIOUS** TO SELL.



SWELL? IT'S BAD... VERY BAD, HENRY. WE'VE GOT TO TALK HIM OUT OF ACCEPTING IT! HE'S HAD AN OFFER FROM A NEGRO FAMILY.



WHAT'S **BRONST**? WELL, YOU **CAVIN'** OUT LOUD, HENRY! IF A **NEGRO FAMILY** MOVES INTO THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THERE'LL BE **OTHERS** FOLLOWING, AND **PRETTY SOON**...

BUT THERE ARE **OTHERS**, DID I?



THE **REAL ESTATE** VALUES WILL DROP TO **NO PRICES** AND... AND... **WHY?** DID YOU SAY... THERE ARE **OTHERS**?



YOU... YOU... **NO, BUT THE CLOWNING**, HENRY! I'M **SERIOUS!** IF WE LET A **NEGRO FAMILY**...

I'M **NOT CLOWNING**, DID MY **GRANDMOTHER** WAS A **RE** **SPOTS** YOU **SEE**, I'M **PART NEGRO**...



WHY... **WHY** DIDN'T YOU EVER TELL ME? I MEAN, I **NEVER**...

I DIDN'T TELL YOU BECAUSE I DIDN'T THINK IT WAS **IMPORTANT**, NO!



THE CROWD HAD SORT OF OFF INTO THE SILENT DARKNESS, NOW. BOB AND OLD BOB PALE STOOD ALONE BEFORE THE EMPTY HOUSE WITH THE BURNED CROSS ON THE FRONT LAWN...

AT FIRST I WAS SHOCKED, NO DOG... BEMILDERED? IMAGINE! MY OWN NEIGHBOR... MY FRIEND WITH REDD BLOOD IN HIS VEINS...



LATER THAT NIGHT, I TOLD ELLA...

THAT WAS A **ROT TEN** TRICK, ELLA... NOW WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, NEP? LIVING HERE, ALL THESE FEARS AND HENRY TELLING US!



I DON'T KNOW! HE SAID HE DON'T THINK IT WAS IMPORTANT! BUT IT IS IMPORTANT, ELLA... WITH NOW LIVING HERE, AND JED MARTIN THINKING OF SELLING HIS PLACE TO COLORED FOLKS. WHY, WHY, THE NEIGHBORHOOD'S GONNA CHANGE! OUR KIDS WILL BE PLAYIN' WITH COLORED KIDS... AND, AND...



THEN I GOT ANGRY, BOB...

I'M NOT GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN, ELLA. I PUT A LOT OF MONEY AND WORK AND SWEAT INTO THIS PLACE. I'M NOT GOING TO SEE IT GO DOWN THE DRAIN. THIS IS OUR HOME, IN A DECENT NEIGHBORHOOD! NEBBER'S GOING TO RUIN IT FOR US! NO, NO!



"I WENT TO SEE JED MARTIN...

THERE'S A **ROUND** AROUND THAT YOU **WO**NT SELL YOUR PLACE TO A **NE**RO FAMILY, JED! I HOPE IT ISN'T TRUE!



I DID GET AN OFFER, BOB... BUT I WOULDN'T DO THAT TO YOU AND THE REST OF THE FOLKS! NO, I'M NOT SELLIN'. NOT TO THEM... NOT IF FOLKS ROUND HERE DON'T WANT ME TO!

"WITH JED TAKEN CARE OF, I STARTED BROODING ABOUT HENRY WILLIAMS, MY PART-NEGRO NEXT DOOR NEIGHBOR..."

WHAT'S WRONG, BOB? I'M THINKING ABOUT THE WILLIAMS'S ELLA. I'M THINKING ABOUT US LIVING NEXT TO A FAMILY WITH REDD BLOOD. I'M THINKING ABOUT MAYBE IT'D BE BETTER IF THEY MOVED AWAY!



MOVE AWAY? BUT, NOW WILL YOU MAKE THEM DO THAT, ELLA, IF THEY DON'T WANT TO?

THEY'LL WANT TO, ELLA... WHEN I'M THROUGH! YOU'LL SEE!



LITTLE FLOCKS OF WHITE MEN
FELL AWAY FROM THE CRUDE
CHAPPED CROSS STANDING ON THE
SINED LAMP. BO STARED AT IT
AS HE SPOKE...

SO I STARTED MY CAMPAIGN.
DOC. I WAS GOING TO SET UP
OF HENRY WILLIAMS AND HIS
FAMILY, NO MATTER WHAT.



I WARNED MY KID.

...SO IF I CATCH EITHER
ONE OF YOU PLAYING
WITH THE WILLIAMS
KID, I'LL SWOON
HIDE.

YES,
PAPA!



I SPOKE TO PEOPLE.

OF COURSE, IF YOU WANT
TO DEAL WITH COLORED
FOLKS, THAT'S OKAY
WITH ME, ONLY I'LL
TAKE MY BUSINESS
ELSEWHERE.

I UNDER-
STAND, BUT
NEED BLOOD,
BUT
THANKS...



I HAD A FENCE PUT UP BETWEEN HENRY'S PROPERTY
AND MINE...

BO, I'D LIKE TO
TALK TO YOU!

I GOT NOTHING TO
SAY TO YOU, HENRY!



AND I WAITED. BUT HENRY DIDN'T TAKE THE HINT, I
GUESS. I WATCHED HIS KID, PLAYING BY HIMSELF, SURFED
BY THE OTHER KIDS...



AND I WATCHED HIS GROCERY ORDERS COME FROM
STORES THAT DIDN'T WANT DEALING WITH HIS KID...



SO I MADE A PHONE CALL. I CALLED HENRY WILLIAMS'
EMPLOYER...

YES, MR. WILLIAMS. I WON'T GIVE YOU MY
WORK FOR ME! WHO'S NAME, MR. WILLIAMS, BUT
IS THAT?
HERE'S A TIP! OF COURSE,
IF YOUR FIRM DOESN'T WANT
EMPLOYING NERDIES, IT
WON'T MATTER! DID YOU
KNOW THAT MR. WILLIAMS
HAS NERD BLOOD?



...AND THAT NIGHT I WATCHED FROM MY WINDOW AS HENRY WILLIAMS CAME HOME WITH HIS SEVEN-ANCE PAY IN HIS POCKET AND NO JOB TO GO TO THE NEXT DAY.



"AND THEN SARAH, *MRS. WILLIAMS*, GOT SICK, AND HENRY WENT TO THE BANK TO BORROW MONEY SO SHE COULD HAVE PROPER MEDICAL CARE. ONLY I'D SPOKE TO MR. WALTERS AT THE BANK. I'D WARNED HIM."

"SORRY, MR. WILLIAMS, YOU'RE NOT A VERY GOOD CREDIT RISK. I'D LIKE TO HELP YOU, ONLY I UNDERSTAND MR. WALTERS!"



BUT HENRY STILL DIDN'T BELIEVE HE'D SENT HIS KID OFF TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES AND LOOKED HIMSELF UP IN HIS HOUSE...

THE STUBBORN @-#-#!



"I WATCHED FOR THE 'FORMAL' SIGN, BUT NONE APPEARED. ONE DAY, I HEARD THE GROCERY DELIVERY MAN RUSH HOME!"

"YOU PAY UP WHAT YOU OWE, MR. WILLIAMS, AND I'LL BRING FOUR ORDERS UNTIL THEN, NOT ONE MORE CENT CREDIT!"

"YOU'LL GET YOUR MONEY! I SWEAR IT! JUST AS SOON AS I LAND A JOB!"



AFTER SARAH DIED, I WATCHED THEM CARRY THE COFFIN OUT TO THE WAITING HEARSE. I HEARD THE PITIFUL SOB-BING OF HENRY'S KID, AND I FELT NO COMPASSION...

HE'LL HAVE TO SELL, NOW...



SO TOMORROW, EARLY, I PUT THE CROSS ON HENRY'S LAKE, AND LET IT... WATCHED IT FLARE UP...



I SAW HENRY'S FACE AT THE WINDOW, STARRING OUT AT THE DAMPING FLAMES. CAN YOU IMAGINE? EVEN THOUGH HE HAD *NEVER* BLED IN HIS YEARS, HIS FACE WAS ASHEN WHITE...



HALF OF THE CHARRED ARM OF THE CROSS FELL TO THE GROUND WITH A SHRIEKING CRASHING SOUND. SID SHOOK HIS HEAD...

I NEVER EXPECTED HIM TO JUDGE HIMSELF, DOC. I ONLY WANTED HIM TO PACK OFF.

PEOPLE DO UNEXPECTED THINGS, SID!



I NEVER WOULD HAVE EXPECTED HIM TO DO WHAT YOU DID... DRIVE HENRY WILLIAMS TO SUICIDE!

HENRY HAD BEEN NO BLOOD IN HIM, DOC! GALT YOU UNDERSTAND?



THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS RED BLOOD, DOC. ALL HUMAN BLOOD IS THE SAME, WHETHER IT IS THE BLOOD OF AN ORIENTAL, OR AN AFRICAN, OR AN EUROPEAN. EXCEPT FOR ONE MEDICAL DIFFERENCE... THE BLOOD TYPE. BUT WHITE, NEGRO, MONGOL, ALL RACES OF MAN HAVE ALL THE BLOOD TYPES...



I REMEMBER ONCE, WHEN I FIRST STARTED PRACTISING MEDICINE, I WAS CALLED OUT TO A FARM. THE FARMER'S LITTLE BOY HAD BEEN RAPIDLY HURT BY A THRESHING. HE'D ALMOST SEVERED HIS ARM. BY THE TIME I GOT THERE...

HE'S LOST A LOT OF BLOOD! HE NEEDS A TRANSFUSION... IMMEDIATELY!

HENRY! I'LL GIVE IT TO HIM...



I CHECKED THE FATHER'S BLOOD, BUT IT WAS THE WRONG TYPE. THEN I CHECKED THE MOTHER'S...

NEITHER OF YOU HAVE THE RIGHT BLOOD TYPE. MINE WON'T WORK, EITHER. AND IF YOUR BOY DOESN'T GET A TRANSFUSION FAST... HE'LL DIE...

GEORGE! COME IN HERE!



GEORGE WAS THE FARMER'S THIRD HAND. HE WAS A RUSSIAN... STRONG AND MUSCULAR. GEORGE WAS A NEGRO...

CHECK HIS TYPE, DOC!

ROLL UP YOUR SLEEVE, GEORGE!



GEORGE'S BLOOD WAS THE SAME TYPE AS THE BOY'S...

GEORGE! WILL YOU DO IT? WILL YOU GIVE MY SON THE BLOOD HE NEEDS?

HE'LL DIE IF YOU DON'T, GEORGE. PLEASE...



THE OTHER HALF OF THE CROSS-ARM
DROPPED TO THE GROUND, SPIRRING
UP LITTLE FLAKES OF ASH...

THE WEIRD SAVED THE
BOY'S LIFE, DID HE
SAVE THE BOY OVER A
QUANT OF BLOOD?

DON'T
PREACH
TO ME
DOC.



ROLL UP YOUR
SLEEVE, DID I?

HUH?
WHY?



ROLL UP YOUR
SLEEVE!

LOOK, DOC...
I... OH, WELL!



THE TALL MAN WITH THE GRIM FACE ROLLED UP HIS
SLEEVE. OLD DOC PAUL TOOK HIS ARM AND LED HIM
TO THE STREET LAMP...



YOU WERE THAT BOY, WERE YOU? GEORGE'S
BLOOD SAVED YOUR LIFE. WEIRD
BLOOD, PUMPED INTO YOUR VEINS,
SHOOKED YOU FROM THE JAWS OF
DEATH!

OH, DOC...



THE COUNTRY CORNER POINTED TO THE THIN WHITE
LINE CIRCUING DOC'S MUSCULAR FOREARM...

THAT'S THE SCAR THE
THRASHING MACHINE
LEFT ON YOUR ARM, ISN'T IT?
WHEN YOU ALMOST SEVERED
IT OVER TWENTY-FIVE YEARS
AGO.

I'VE THEN
THE BOY...



THE CORNER SHOOK HIS HEAD AND WALKED AWAY. BY
JUST STOOD THERE, THE TEARS STREAMING DOWN HIS
CHEEKS...



AND ON THE BURNED LAMP, THE CHAINED UPRIGHT, THE
REMAINS OF THE BURNED CROSS, COLLAPSED INTO A
PILE OF ASH AND CARBON...

THE END

UPON REFLECTION

THE PSYCHIATRIST'S OFFICE WAS DIMLY LIT AND THE TRAFFIC NOISES OUTSIDE WERE ALMOST INAUDIBLE. JOEY LAY ON THE SOFT LEATHER COUCH TREMBLING, HIS VOICE ONLY A HOARSE WHISPER. THE PSYCHIATRIST SAT BESIDE HIM, A Pencil AND Pencil IN HAND...



JOEY BERGMAN, NUMBER ONE CONTENDER FOR THE MIDDLEWEIGHT CHAMPIONSHIP, LISHED. HE LAY BACK ON THE DIVAN STARING UP AT THE SHADOWY CEILING...



"YEAH, DOC. *MARTY* DIED. I *KILLED* HIM. IT WAS IN THE EIGHTH ROUND. I'D BEEN LANCING MY LEFT JAW PRETTY REGULARLY AND MARTY'D GOTTEN GLASSY-EYED AND SLODDY. HE OPENED UP AND I CAUGHT HIM WITH A RIGHT CROSS TO THE HEAD..."



'MANNY WENT DOWN, JONDA LIKE A SNOW-MAN MELTING!... FOLDING UP, SORT OF, IN A HEAP. THE REF COUNTED HIM OUT...'



'BUT MANNY DIDN'T GET UP. THE COMMISSION DOCTOR CLIMBED INTO THE RING AND LOOKED HIM OVER...'



'I FELT ALL RICK INCHES. SOMEHOW, THEY GOT ME THROUGH THE JEERING CROWD TO MY DRESSING ROOM...'



'AND THAT'S WHEN MANNY'S WIFE CAME INTO THE DRESSING ROOM. SHE WAS WHITE AS A GHOST AND HER EYES WERE FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE JUST STARED AT ME...'



'SHE STARTED SCREAMING AND SCREAMING AT ME...'



'THEY CRASHED HER OUT, AND I COULD HEAR HER ANGRY VOICE WHINING AT ME AS THEY TOOK HER DOWN THE HALL...'



'I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT, DOG! I KEPT BEING MANNY'S GLASSY EYES STARRING AT ME... AND I KEPT HEARING HIS WIFE'S VOICE SCREAMING...'



"IT WAS THE NEXT MORNING WHEN I GOT UP THAT I FIRST NOTICED MY HANDS. THEY'D CHANGED DURING THE NIGHT. THEY'D GROWN AND SHRIVELED AND GROWN DOLF AND TRUSTED."



"GOOD LORD! WHAT WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME?"

"WHEN I WENT DOWN TO THE GYM THAT AFTERNOON, I KEPT MY HANDS HIDDEN. STUFFED IN MY POCKETS. I DIDN'T WANT ANYBODY ELSE TO SEE HOW HORROR THEY'D BECOME."



"I MATTER, JERRY! YOU LOOK DOWN-IN-THE-EAR! DON'T FEEL BAD ABOUT WILLIAMS, KID. IT COULD'VE HAPPENED TO ANYBODY!"

"THANKS, BERNIE"

"BUT WHEN I GOT HOME THAT NIGHT, AND I LOOKED AT MY HANDS AGAIN, THEY'D GROWN WORSE! THEY LOOKED... THEY LOOKED LIKE..."



"...LIKE THE HANDS OF A BEAST!"

"AND LATER, WHEN I WAS UNDRESSING, I SAW MY FEET..."



"OH, GOD! MY FEET, TOO! WHAT'S COMING THIS TO ME?"

"ALL NIGHT I TOSSED AND TURNED... FEELING MYSELF CHANGING... FEELING MY BODY... MY FACE... BECOMING MORE AND MORE HORROR WITH EACH PASSING NIGHT MOMENT..."



"MRS. WILLIAMS OBTAINED ME! SHE MADE ME TURN INTO A TWISTED SAPIRE ANIMAL! SHE WISHED IT ON ME!"

"IN THE MORNING, WHEN I GOT UP, I CAREFULLY AVOIDED THE MIRROR'S AROUND MY PLACE. I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE THE HORROR MAFORMED MONSTER I'D CHANGED INTO. I GOT SOME SHEETS AND COVERED THEM."



"SEN, WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?"

I STAYED IN ALL THAT DAY AND THE NEXT, ALONE, NOT EVEN ANSWERING THE TELEPHONE WHEN IT RANG. AND AS THE HOURS PASTED, AND I KNEW I WAS BECOMING MORE AND MORE MISERABLE AND HORRIBLE, I SLEW PANTIES.



MY SON! WHERE'S MY SON?

I FOUND THE SON IN A MINUTE SPANER, IT WHOLELOADED. I WAS GOING TO KILL MYSELF, DOC. I FELT IT WAS THE ONLY WAY OUT. AND THEN I THOUGHT OF YOU. I THOUGHT YOU COULD HELP ME. SO I CALLED...

YES, THIS IS DOCTOR COLEMAN? CAN I HELP YOU?

CAN I COME UP AND SEE YOU, DOC? IT'S... IT'S VERY IMPORTANT. IT'S... A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH!



SO THAT'S MY STORY, DOC. NOW YOU KNOW WHY I LOOK LIKE THIS... HIDEOUS... MISERABLE... A TRISTED MONSTER!



SAY THAT'S JUST IT, MR. BERGANT! YOU DON'T LOOK LIKE THAT AT ALL!

I DON'T... BUT MY HANDS... LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE UGLY... MISERABLE... AND MY FEET...



YOU'RE WRONG, MR. BERGANT. YOU'RE PERFECTLY NORMAL-LOOKING! THERE ARE NO DISTORTIONS IN YOUR BODY, YOUR FACE...

THE DISTORTIONS ARE IN YOUR MIND! YOU THINK YOU ARE PHYSICALLY MALFORMED BECAUSE YOU ARE SUFFERING FROM A GUILT-COMPLEX CONNECTED WITH MR. WILLIAMS' DEATH AND HIS WIFE'S ACCUSATIONS...



YOU HEAR WHEN SHE CALLED ME A 'TRISTED GUILT BEAST'?

EXACTLY! YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS MIND, FRIGHTENED WITH GUILTY FEELINGS, ACCEPTED HER ANGRY DESCRIPTION OF YOU AND HAS MADE YOUR CONSCIOUS MIND BELIEVE IT!



THEN I'M NOT REALLY UGLY... HORRIBLE? I HAVEN'T CHANGED?

YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED, MR. BERKHAUNT! YOU'RE STILL A PHYSICAL SPECIMEN. COME! LET ME PROVE IT TO YOU! THERE'S A FULL-LENGTH MIRROR IN THE NEXT ROOM...



BUT, MR. BERKHAUNT! CAN'T YOU RELIEVE WHAT I SAY?

I BELIEVE YOU, DOC. BUT... WELL... I, I'M AFRAID!



ALL RIGHT! SORT YOURSELF! I WON'T FORCE YOU TO LOOK! BUT IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO SETTLE YOUR MIND!

I'LL... I'LL LOOK... AS SOON AS I FEEL UP TO IT!



FINE! AND KEEP IN TOUCH WITH ME! PERHAPS, WHEN YOU HAVE TIME, WE CAN GO INTO A DEEPER ANALYSIS OF YOUR SUBCONSCIOUS, FIND OUT WHY YOU LIKE TO FIGHT, FOR EXAMPLE... AND...

SURE, DOC! SURE! THANKS!



JOEY CLOSED THE DOOR TO THE PSYCHIATRIST'S APARTMENT AND STOOD ALONE IN THE DESERTED STREET INHALEING THE FRESH COOL NIGHT AIR.



HE STARTED ACROSS THE STREET, HIS FOOTSTEPS ECHOING INTO THE SILENT CLEAR EVENING...



SUDDENLY JOEY STOPPED. HE COULD SEE IT IN FRONT OF THE STORE WINDOW, ITS SILVER SURFACE REFLECTING THE STREET LAMP ONTO THE SIDEWALK IN A RECTANGLE OF SOFT YELLOW LIGHT...



JOEY HESITATED, THEN ISSUED
HIS HEAD, LAUGHING...



...AND STEPPED IN FRONT OF THE
MIRROR...



JOEY STARED...



JOEY SCREAMED...



...AND TOOK THE LOADED GUN FROM HIS POCKET,
PLACED IT AGAINST HIS TEMPLE, AND FIRED...



THE POLICEMAN STOOD BEFORE THE FLOWING SURFACE OF THE
MIRROR, STIMATING DOWN AT THE LIFELESS BODY ON THE SIDEWALK...



THE STOREKEEPER SHOOK HIS
HEAD...



SQUEEZE PLAY

HARRY COVERED AGAINST THE ROUGH CONCRETE PILLAR THAT SUPPORTED THE WEATHER-BEATEN BOARD OVERHEAD, SWEATING IN THE WARM SUMMER AIR IN GREAT GULPS, TRYING TO CATCH HIS BREATH. THEY WERE AFTER HIM, SOON THEY'D BE SEARCHING DOWN HERE, DOWN IN THE DAMP SAND BENEATH THE BOARDWALK... BE ANCHING FOR THE KILLER. HARRY LOOKED AROUND WILDLY WHERE TO HIDE? WHERE TO RUN? AND THEN HE SAW THE SHIMMERING MASS OF ALMOST NAKED HUMANITY THAT JAMMED THE SUNNY BEACH.

"SOME? THEY'LL BE LOOKING FOR A GUY IN A FIGHT AND SOMEWHERE IF I WERE OUT IN THAT CROWD IN A BATHING SUIT THEY'D NEVER FIND ME..."



HARRY PULLED HIS T-SHIRT OVER HIS HEAD AND STEPPED OUT OF HIS SUNGLASSES...

"I'LL BUY MY CLOTHES HERE AND COME BACK FOR THEM LATER..."



HARRY KICKED OFF HIS SHOES AND TUGGED OFF HIS SOCKS. THEN HE KNOLED AND SCOOPED A HOLE IN THE DAMP COOL SAND...

"LUCKY THING I WORE MY TIGHTS UNDER MY BLUE JEANS..."



HARRY MOVED OUT OF THE SHADOW OF THE BOARDWALK INTO THE SUNLIGHT. HE THREADED HIS WAY THROUGH THE SPARKLED SUN-BAKED FIGURES, WIND AROUND THE SPREAD BLANKETS, MOVED DOWN TOWARD THE MOST CROWDED PART OF THE BEACH.

I'LL CORA. I'M RID OF YOU. I'M FREE AGAIN AND NEXT TIME I WON'T MAKE SUCH A STUPID MISTAKE. I WON'T GET MYSELF INTO THAT KIND OF A JAM AGAIN...



HARRY SHRIED. HE PICKED AN OPEN SPOT BETWEEN THE LAUGHING, PLEMPING GROUPS OF BATHING-SUIT-CLAD PEOPLE AND SAT DOWN. YES, HE WAS FREE OF CORA. SHE HADN'T GONE TO THE HIM DOWN. SHE HADN'T GONE TO FORCE HIM INTO A SHOT-BOW MARRIAGE. CORA WAS DEAD.

WOMEN! THEY'RE ALL THE SAME. EVERYBODY'S ROSE... ALL FOR... AND THEN THEY START TRYING TO GRAB ON AND HOLD... THEN THEY START TALKING MARRIAGE...



HARRY THOUGHT ABOUT CORA. HOW THEY'D MET... HOW HE'D TAKEN HER OUT... THE GOOD TIMES THEY'D HAD TOGETHER... THE SATURDAY AFTERNOONS... THE NIGHTS... AND THEN, HOW CORA'D STARTED...

YES, CORA WAS JUST LIKE ALL THE REST. RIGHT AWAY THEY FEEL YOU GIVE 'EM SOMETHING, RIGHT AWAY THEY FEEL THEY OWN YOU. HARRY REMEMBERED THIS MORNING... HOW CORA'D PICKED HIM...



WHEN ARE WE GOING TO GET MARRIED, HARRY?

SEE, BABY, I DON'T KNOW. NOT FOR A WHILE, ANYWAY!



HARRY! I'VE GOT TO SEE YOU! IT'S IMPORTANT!

OKAY, BABY! HOW ABOUT THE BEACH? I'LL PICK YOU UP!

HE'D DRESSED IN HIS TRUNKS, PUTTING HIS CLOTHES ON OVER THEM, AND HE'D GONE TO CORA'S HOUSE...

HE'D GONE INTO HER ROOM HER-VOUSUALLY... JEEB ROOM THAT HAD HELD MUCH POND MEMORIES...



READY, BABY?

COME INSIDE, HARRY! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!



WHAT'S UP, BABY?

WHEN ARE WE GETTING MARRIED, HARRY?

I TOLD YOU, BABY! NOT FOR A WHILE, WHEN I'VE MADE...

YOU'VE GOT TO MARRY ME, HARRY! MIGHT NOW! TODAY!

AND THEN HE'D TOLD HIM. AND HARRY'S BLOOD HAD FROZE IN HIS VEINS. HE'D BEEN **TRAPPED!** HIS MIND HAD WHIRLED. HE'D THOUGHT FAST. AND THEN HE'D COME UP WITH THE ANSWER.

"SO YOU SEE? YOU'VE GOT TO! YOU'VE JUST GOT TO MARRY ME TODAY!"

"SURE, HONEY! SURE. WE'LL GET MARRIED. BUT WE CAN'T TOMOR! THE LICENSE BUREAU IS CLOSED! IT'S SATURDAY."

HE'D HIDDEN HIS RELIEF AS SHE'D LOOKED AT HIM, HER FACE PALE.

"MONDAY, THEN! MONDAY FIRST THING!"

"SURE? SURE? NOW, S'MON? LET'S GO TO THE READY!"

THEY'D HIDDEN DOWN ON THE BUS, HARDLY TALKING. SINCE HE'D GLANCED AT HER AND SEEN HER EYES OVERFLOWING WITH TEARS. AND HE'D SMILED HIS TEETH.

"TRAPPED! CORRECT! THAT'S WHAT I AM! A STUPID FUMBLING IDIOT! AND NOW, I'M CAUGHT!"

"SOR..."

THEY'D GOTTEN OFF THE BUS AND STARTED THROUGH THE GINGERBREAD-PAVED TOWN. THE SUNDAY. THE HURRY-BURRY MUSIC HAD EXPLODED INTO THE HOT NOON AIR. TINGS, CRASH. EVERYTHING WAS CHEER. EVERYTHING WAS PHONE. HARRY'D HATED IT ALL.

NOW, I'LL BE TIED DOWN TO A CHURCHY APARTMENT, FURNISHING A FINE-CLUCK, SWEATING T'YAR BILLS, AND WHININ' IN EVERY NIGHT WITH A JARLIN' GRAY...



SOMEBODY YELL! YEAN? HONEY HARRY? HE'D FALLIN' ALL RIGHT! RIGHT ON HIS FACE! BACK INTO FROUBLE! THAT'S WHAT GAMES WERE! THROUGHLY THIS ONE! THIS GUY! HE'D HAVE TO MARRY HER UNLESS... UNLESS...

"HARRY? WHAT ARE YOU STARING AT?"

"YOU, CORA!"



THE SCREAMS AND THE ROARS ABOVE HAD MADE HARRY LOOK UP INTO THE DAZZLING SUNLIGHT AT THE BLUR OF THE HURTLING ROLLER-COASTER CAR WITH ITS FREEZED SCREAMING RIDERS...

"CORRE! THAT SENS' SWELL'D UP MY SPINE, HARRY. I CAN'T STAND ROLLER-COASTERS!"

"S'MATTER, HONEY? SCARED YOU'LL SEE DINNERHOO FALL?"



OF COURSE! IF CORA WERE DEAD, HE'D BE FREE-HAIR. FREE TO RUN WILD HAHN. AND THIS TIME, HE'D BE CHASTEN. HE GRABBED CORA'S HAND...

"S'MON, BABY? WE'RE GOING TO TAKE A RIDE."

"NO, HARRY? NO? I DON'T WANT TO GO. I DON'T LIKE ROLLER-COASTERS. I'M SCARED. HARRY! PLEASE..."



HED CALLED HER TO THE TICKET BOOTH, SHE'D BEEN TO HIM, PLEASED.

NO, HARRY, PLEASE. I'M SCARED. MAKE FIFTY, HARRY!

MR. C'MON, CORA. BE A SPORT! TWO, PLEASE...



THE TICKET-SELLER'D GRINNED AT HARRY. FELLERS WERE ALWAYS BRAGGING THEY GOT ON THE ROLLER-COASTER. AND GIRLS WERE ALWAYS SCREAMING THEY WERE SCARED. IT WAS ONE BIG GAME.

HARRY DON'T MAKE ME! I DON'T WANT TO! HARRY! WHAT ARE YOU TRYIN' TO DO?

C'MON CORA, IT'S FUN! YOU'LL SEE!



YEAH. ONE BIG GAME, ONLY, TO HARRY, THIS WAS A GAME OF LIFE OR DEATH. LIFE, BEING FREE. DEATH, BEING MARRIED TO CORA.

HARRY! NO! LET ME GO! HARRY!

ATTA BOY, FELLER. MAKE 'ER GO. WE JUST CAME OFF IT. NOW!



THEY'D GRINNED AT HER, THE PEOPLE ALL AROUND. THEY'D GRINNED AT CORA'S SCREAMING PLEAS. ALL GIRLS SCREAMED. THAT WAS WHAT THEY WERE SUPPOSED TO DO. THEY WERE, IF THEY REALLY WANTED TO... AND THEY WANTED NOT TO, IF THEY REALLY DIDN'T. BUT CORA WAS SCARED. HARRY'D HELD HER IN A FIVE-LINE GRIP.

THE LAST SEAT, CORA. C'MON...

NO! NO! OH, GOD...



AND CORA, SCREAMING... AND THE PEOPLE IN THE FORWARD PART OF THE CAR SCREAMING TOO, KNOWING HER, AS THEY STARTED UP THE LOOMING INCLINE TO THE TOP.

STOP! STOP! PLEASE, STOP! HE'S GOING TO KILL ME! PLEASE! STOP IT!

EEEEEEEEEE...



AND THEN THE REALIZATION HAD DAWNED UPON CORA. SHE'D BEEN IT IN HARRY'S EYES. THE SUDDEN REALIZATION... AS THE COASTER'S STARTED AWAY.

HE'S GOING TO KILL ME! HELP ME! HELP ME!

SHUT UP, YOU CRUMMY LITTLE TRAMP...



HARRY REMEMBERED NOW, AS THEY REACHED THE TOP OF THE INCLINE, WHEN ALL EYES WERE STARRING AHEAD IN FASCINATION AND FRIGHT DOWN INTO THE STEEL, NET-WORKED CANYON INTO WHICH THEY WERE STARTING TO PLUMBE. NOW HE'D GOT CORA WITH ALL OF HIS STRENGTH.

ON BOO! STOP! STOP! HE'S GOIN'-H-H-H-E-E-E...



AND HARRY REMEMBERED HOW HE'D PUSHED HER FROM THE CAR AS IT HURTLED DOWNWARD...



...HOW HER BODY'D BOUNCED AGAINST THE BIRDS, TWISTING AND TURNING AS IT FELL TO THE PARKMENT FAR BELOW...



...HOW HE'D COME INTO HIS ACT, SCREAMING AT THE TOP OF HIS LUNGS ALL THE TIME IN

SHE FELL OUT! MY GIRL FELL OUT!



...HOW THE CAR HAD FINALLY GLIDED TO REST, AND THE ROARING AND SCREAMING HAD SUBSIDED, AND ONLY HIS HOARSE-EDGED VOICE WAS CLEAR

MY GIRL FELL OUT! FIND HER! FIND HER!



SHE'S DEAD BUDDY! WE FOUND HER.

HARRY REMEMBERED THE FACES, STARRING AT HIM



DEAD!

SOMEBODY CALL A COP. HE DRAGGED HER ON THAT RIDE.

ANGRY FACES...MOVING TOWARD HIM

IT...IT WAS AN ACCIDENT? I SWEAR.

SHE SAID HE'D KILL HER? I HEARD IT!

WE TOO!

GRAB HIM!



SO HARRY'S RUN. HE'D RUN WILDLY THROUGH THE AMUSEMENT AREA DOWN TOWARD THE BOARDWALK...



THERE HE GOES!

AFTER HIM! HE'S A KILLER!

SOMEBODY GET A COP!

HARRY LOOKED UP. SHRILL VOICES SHOOK HIM OUT OF HIS REVERIE. A LAUGHING GROUP OF GIRLS WERE UPDRESSING THEIR BIKINIS BEHIND HIM...



OVER HERE A LITTLE MORE, SUE!

DON'T RISK SAND ON IT, SUE!

HE LOOKED THEN OVER. WHAM, NICE STUFF. ANY OTHER TIME, HE'D CONCENTRATE ON THAT KINK! BUT NOW... HE GLANCED TOWARD THE BOARDWALK. HIS HEART STOPPED...



GOOD LORD!

TWO COPS WERE THERE, WHINE HE'D HIDDEN HIS CLOTHES. THEY HAD HIS T-SHIRT, BUNGAREES, AND SHOES IN THEIR HANDS. THEY WERE SCANNING THE JAMMED BEACH...



THEY GOT MY STUFF! I'M JONNE. HOW'D I GET AROUND? I HAVEN'T GOT A RICKET AND I CAN'T WALK THROUGH THE STREETS LIKE THIS.

PUT THE CLOTHES IN A SAFE PLACE, JONNE!

CAR FEYS! HARRY TURNED. HE SPOT THE DAMES. THERE WERE FIVE OF THEM, LAUGHING, GIGGLING. IF HE COULD FIND UP WITH THEM, THEY COULD DRIVE HIM HOME. ONE OF THEM LOOKED HIS WAY AND HE SMILED.



MY MIND IF I JOIN YOU?

SURE, HANDSOME! BEAT G'MON...

OH, IT'S ALL RIGHT, GILS. HE'S COMESOME G'MON OVER, GOOD LOOKIN'!

THANKS! MY NAME'S ER... JONNEY!

HELLO, JONNEY! I'M SUE!

THAT'S HER, AND THIS IS ANN. I'M JILL. THAT'S JANET!



THEY WHISPERED AMONG THEMSELVES, GIGGLING. HARRY SMILED. THEY WERE PUSHOVERS. JUST LIKE JONNE'D BEEN. ALL DAMES WERE PUSHOVERS. HARRY'D HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE. HE'D CHEL-SPED QUITE A WHIF WITH DAMES...



THE SUN CAME OUT WHEN YOU GIRLS CAME ALONG! UP TO NOW, IT'S BEEN A PRETTY DULL DAY!

ISN'T THAT SWEET?

HEY, JAZZAY. HOW'S ABOUT A SWIM?

HARRY BALMED. BUT THEY HAD THE CAR. THEY WERE HIS SALVATION...



W-HOT NOW? LATER, MAYBE...

AW, G'MON, BIG BOY! LET'S GO!

DEAR G'MON, ANN, TALKING!

HE-SAY!

THEY GRABBED HIM BY HIS ARMS, HIS SHOULDERS, HIS WAIST. THEY THIRDED AND PUSHED AND PULLED HIM DOWN TO THE WATER...



"REALLY, GIRLS, I DON'T FEEL LIKE IT!"

"SHOW US YOUR BACK-STROKE, LOVE!"

THE SURF LAPPED AT HIS ANKLES. HARRY SWIMMED. HE TRIED TO EXPLAIN... BUT THEY ONLY LAUGHED, TIGHTENING THEIR HOLDS, SQUEALING, DIPPING...

"I... I... TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH, I CAN'T SWIM, GIRLS."

"MOM, HE'S ALL MUSCLES!"



THEY PULLED HIM AND PUSHED HIM, GIGGLING, GASPING, CHATTERING, SHOUTING. HE SCREAMED AS THE WATER LAPPED HIS CHEST...



"I CAN'T SWIM! I SWEAR IT!"

"O'MON, JOHNNY! DON'T PLEASE! HE'S A SPORT!"

THE WATER WAS OVER HIS HEAD NOW. HIS FEET NUMB, THEY POINTED, SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING TO STAND ON. THEY CLUNG TO HIM, KEEPING HIM UP...



"I CAN'T SWIM! TAKE ME BACK!"

"GRAY MUSCLE-MAN! LET'S SEE YOU DO YOUR STUFF!"

"LOOK, KIDS!"

BACK ON THE BEACH, IN THE GIRL'S BLANKET, FIVE BOYS WAVED A GREETING...



"THE FELLERS ARE HERE!"

"LET'S GO!"

"HIT HIM!"

"WAIT! DON'T LEAVE ME!"

THE GIRLS STRUCK OFF FOR SHORE, WHIRLING AT THEIR GATES, LAUGHING, SQUEALING, NEVER HEARING HARRY'S AMBUSHED CRIES AS HE THRASHED ABOUT...



"HI, JOHNNY!"

"HI, JOHNNY!"

"I GOT THE CAR WITH ME, SWIM! HELP!"

AND THEY NEVER EVEN TURNED AROUND TO SEE THE WATER POURING INTO HARRY'S MOUTH, HIS STOMACH, HIS LUNGS. THEY NEVER EVEN SAW HIM GO DOWN FOR THE LAST TIME...



"SLOOOO..."

THE END

LEGENDARY 1950s EC COMICS!

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SUSPENSTORIES



JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**

The ORPHAN

WELL, IT'S ALL OVER NOW. EVERYTHING WORKED OUT SWELL. BUT FOR A WHILE BACK THERE, IT LOOKED PRETTY BAD. I WAS AWFUL UNHAPPY. I USED TO GET MYSELF TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. GOLLY, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS CRY UP AND DNE, I WAS SO MISERABLE. WHY I... I... OH, SEE? I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD YOU WHO I AM. MY NAME'S LUCY... LUCY JOHNSON. I'M TEN YEARS OLD AND I'M IN THE FOURTH GRADE. AND LIKE I SAID UP TO A FEW WEEKS AGO, I WAS MISERABLE. IT WAS MY PARENTS. THEY WERE AWFUL TO ME. YOU SEE, MY DADDY WAS AN ALCOHOLIC...

SAM? YOU'RE DRUNK AGAIN?

SHO WHAT? WHAT ELSE? 'SHE I GOT IN LIFE? SURE I'M DRUNK! I LIKE F'GET DRUNK! I... I... SHUFF! WHAT'S SHE COM' UP THIN TIME OF NIGHT? SET F' RED, YUH LIL' WHAT? WHASH YUH STARRIN' AT? HUNT HUNT

I HEARD YOU COME IN, DADDY! I WANTED TO SEE IF YOU WERE ALL HUNT!



DADDY WAS TERRIBLE WHEN HE WAS DRUNK. HE USED TO BEAT ME.

FER JUS! LIVE YER MOTHER ALBANY BASSIN? ALBANYSH LECTURIN' ME? WELL, I'M ALL RIGHT. SHEE? NOW, SET F' RED...

OWWWW!

SOB SOB



AND MOM AND DAD USED TO **ARGUE** ALL THE TIME, MOSTLY ABOUT ME...

CANTON: KEEP TH' BRAT IN BED WHEN SHE'S SUPPOSED T'BE IN BED? WHAT KIND OF A MOTHER ARE YUH, ANYWAY, MILLIE?

BEIN' A MOTHER WASN'T MY IDEA! IT WAS YOURS! I NEVER



MOM NEVER WANTED ME, I GUESS. AND SHE'D ALWAYS BRING IT UP WHEN SHE AND DAD WOULD ARGUE. SHE'D ALWAYS BLAME HIM...

AND IF YOU'D BEEN SOBER... INSTEAD OF STINKIN' DRUNK

WELL THAT'S YOUR TOWN LUCK. SO NOW THAT YOU GOT 'ER... TAKE CARE OF 'ER! IT'S YER DUTY!



AND YOUR DUTY IS TO BE A RESPECTABLE DECENT HUSBAND AND FATHER INSTEAD OF A DIRTY SLOPPY DRUNKEN BUM!

SOR... SOR...

I TOL' YOU T' GET T' BED!



LEAVE HER ALONE, SAM!

YOU KEEP OUT OF THIN, MILLIE! IF YOU CAN'T TEACH HER DISCIPLINE, I WILL!

NO? NO? PLEASE, DADDY! DON'T HIT ME!



LIKE I SAID, DADDY WAS AWFUL WHEN HE WAS DRUNK. HE USED TO BEAT ME BLACK AND BLUE...

TAKE THAT, YUH! BRAT... AND THAT...

SAM! FOR GOD'S SAKE...



AND LIKE I SAID, SOMETIMES I USED TO GIVE MYSELF TO SLEEP AT NIGHT... LISTENING TO THEM DOWNSTAIRS... YELLING AND SCREAMING...

SOR... SOR...

I'LL DO WHAT I LIKE!

YOU'LL BE A MOTHER TO THAT BRAT!

THAT'S WHAT YOU'LL DO!



AND SOMETIMES I'D JUST WANTED TO CRY UP AND DIE...

WELL, IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE JOB I'M DOING, WHY DON'T YOU DIVORCE ME? I'LL GET HER A NEW MOTHER!

YOU'D LIKE THAT WOULDN'T YOU? YOU'D LIKE TO BE FREE AGAIN? WELL, YOU'RE NOT GETTING ANY THAT EASY, MILLIE!



I HATED THEM! I HATED THEM BOTH! I DON'T KNOW WHO I HATED MORE... DADDY, BECAUSE HE BEAT ME AND YELLED AT ME AND CAME HOME DRUNK ALL THE TIME... OR MOM, BECAUSE SHE NEVER WANTED ME AND NEVER SHOWED ME ANY LOVE AND WAS WILLING TO GIVE ME UP... JUST LIKE THAT!



ONCE, I RAN AWAY. I RAN AWAY TO MY MOTHER'S SISTER'S HOUSE, WAY ACROSS TOWN...



WHY, LUCY?

SOB, SOB... AUNT KATE...

I Poured out my heart to Aunt Kate. I told her the whole story...



AND, SOB... I'M SO UNHAPPY, AUNT KATE... SO TERRIBLY UNHAPPY!

WHY, YOU POOR DEAR CHILD!

PLEASE LET ME STAY HERE WITH YOU, AUNT KATE! PLEASE! YOU LOVE ME, DON'T YOU?

OF COURSE I LOVE YOU, DEAR! BUT... WELL... I'LL TALK TO THEM!



I REMEMBER THE DAY AUNT KATE CAME TO TALK TO MOMMY AND DADDY...



...IT'S UNFAIR TO THE CHILD, MAMIE. I CAN GIVE HER THE LOVE AND AFFECTION SHE CRAVES! LET ME ADOPT HER!

IF YOU WANT THE BOY, YOU CAN HAVE HER, KATE!

NO YOU DON'T, MILDRED! YOU'VE GOT SOMETHING PULL AWAY FAST, CHIEF!

MOMMY WAS MORE THAN GLAD TO GET RID OF ME, BUT DADDY WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT. I CRIED SO...

THAT BRAT STAYS HERE! SHE BELONGS WITH HER NATURAL MOTHER. NO, DRIED UP OLD MAID'S GONNA BRING UP MY KID!

PLEASE, DADDY! PLEASE LET ME GO LIVE WITH AUNTIE KATE!

RAM! NOW COULD YOUR



YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, KATE! THIS IS BETWEEN MAMIE AND ME. IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. THE BRAT STAYS! AN MAMIE TAKES CARE OF HER LIKE A MOTHER SHOULD!

HE'S JUST BEING SPITEFUL, KATE! I'M SORRY!

I'M NOT SORRY FOR EITHER OF YOU, WILLIE. I'M SORRY FOR LUCY!



DADDY WOULDN'T *GIVE* HIS *CONSENT*, AND SO I COULDN'T *GO* AND *LIVE* WITH AUNTIE KATE. THAT'S *ALL* THERE WAS *TO* IT! AND THEN DADDY STARTED DRINKING WORSE... SOMETIMES HE WOULDN'T COME HOME AT ALL... FOR DAYS...

WHERE'RE YOU *GOING*, MOMMY?

I'M GOING *OUT*, LUCY! TO... TO LOOK FOR YOUR FATHER!



ONE NIGHT, AFTER DADDY HADN'T COME HOME AND MOMMY WENT OUT 'LOOKING', I WOKE UP TO THE SOUND OF SOFT GENTLE VOICES DOWNSTAIRS. I TIPTOED OUT OF MY ROOM. MOM WAS DOWN THERE IN THE HALL, SAYING GOOD-NIGHT TO SOMEBODY...

WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN, BABY?

I'LL CALL YOU, STEVE!



AFTER HE'S LEFT, MOMMY TURNED. SHE LOOKED SO PRETTY. ALL SMILES. I'D NEVER SEEN HER LOOK LIKE THAT.



WHO'S STEVE, MOMMY?

LUCY! WHY WOULDN'T YOU SLEEPING?



WHO'S STEVE, MOMMY?

MOMMY. MOMMY MET A VERY NICE MAN, DEAR. WE BECAME... VERY GOOD FRIENDS. HE... HE JUST BROUGHT ME HOME.



DOES DADDY KNOW STEVE, MOMMY?

ER... NO, DEAR! YOUR FATHER DOESN'T *KNOW* ABOUT HIM! YOU WON'T TELL HIM, *WILL* YOU? AT LEAST, *NOT* YET!



WHY NOT?

BECAUSE DEAR. *MAYBE* MOMMY WILL MARRY STEVE! MOMMY ISN'T *SURE*! MOMMY WANTS TO *MAKE* UP HER MIND! YOU WON'T TELL DADDY ABOUT HIM UNTIL MOMMY IS *SURE*. *WILL* YOU?



WILL I MEET HIM, MOMMY?
WILL I MEET STEVE?

WE'LL SEE, DEAR.
NOW RUN A LONG
UP TO BED!



LATER, I HEARD MOMMY CALL STEVE ON THE TELEPHONE...

YOU CAN COME HERE NOW, STEVE. YES! YES! WELL, LUCY KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU. WE CAN'T AFFORD TO TAKE ANY CHANCES THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO HIDE IT FROM HER ANY LONGER! BESIDES, SHE WANTS TO MEET YOU!



THE NEXT TIME DADDY DIDN'T COME HOME, STEVE CAME TO THE HOUSE. MOMMY LET ME STAY UP...

WELL, WELL! SO THIS IS LITTLE LUCY! SAY, AREN'T YOU A PRETTY LITTLE GIRL!

HE'S YES, NICE, I DEAR! MOMMY!



STEVE WAS VERY SWEET TO ME. HE PATTED MY HEAD AND SMILED AND TOLD ME A STORY...

...SO THE PRINCE AND THE PRINCESS LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER!

ALL RIGHT, DEAR! TIME FOR BED!



HE EVEN KISSED ME GOOD-NIGHT...

GOOD-NIGHT, KITTEN. AM HERE'S SOMETHING FOR TOMORROW & ONE... FOR CANDY!

DEE! THANKS STEVE! YOU'RE SWEET!



STEVE MADE ME SO HAPPY. I LIKED STEVE. I USED TO LIE AWAKE AND THINK OF HOW NICE IT WOULD BE IF HE WERE MY REAL FATHER...

YOU'D BETTER GO, STEVE! IT'S LATE!

OKAY, DEAR! CALL ME THE NEXT TIME THE COAST IS CLEAR.



AND MOMMY... MOMMY WAS SO DIFFERENT TOO. SHE'D CHANGED SINCE SHE'D MET STEVE.

GOOD-NIGHT, MOMMY!

GOOD-NIGHT, DEAR! AND REMEMBER! STEVE IS OUR SECRET. YOURS AND MINE! YOU MUSTN'T TELL A SOUL! NOT EVEN DADDY!



AND WHEN DADDY WOULD COME HOME DRUNK AND SWEARISH AND TREAT ME BAD, I DIDN'T CARE. I JUST THOUGHT OF MOMMY AND STEVE AND HOW THEY'D WORK THINGS OUT AFTER A WHILE AND THAT IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE THIS FOR ALWAYS...



"WASH YUH LLOORIN' AT YUH DUMB DUFF BRAT? E'WAR, SCRAM! I'M ALONE! GO T' BED!"

YES... DADDY?

AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, I AWOKE TO THE SOUND OF VOICES... MUFFLED VOICES... COMING FROM MOMMY'S BEDROOM...



THAT'S STEVE'S VOICE! BUT WHY IS HE WHISPERING? HE NEVER WHISPERS WHEN HE COMES HERE...

I REMEMBER HOW I TIP-TOED TO MOMMY'S ROOM AND PEEKED IN THROUGH THE SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR...



BOLLY! MOMMY'S FADING? AND STEVE IS HELPING? HE ARTFULLY DISAPPOINTED!

Y'ER OW, LUCY WILL ENAY? SO LUCY WILL ENAY?

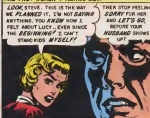
I LISTENED, MY HEART BEATING WILDLY IN MY CHEST...



NOTHING? ONLY... WELL... IT'S JUST THAT SHE REALLY BELIEVED YOU'D BE HER NEW DADDY? SHE LIKES YOU A LOT?

LOOK! IT WAS YOUR IDEA TO PLAY UP TO HER. YOU KNOW HOW I HATE KIDS. LET HER OLD MAN HAVE HER!

THEY WEREN'T TAKING ME? THEY WERE RUNNING AWAY AND THEY WEREN'T TAKING ME...



LOOK, STEVE. THIS IS THE WAY WE PLANNED IT. I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING. YOU KNOW HOW I FELT ABOUT LUCY... EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING? I CAN'T STAND KIDS MYSELF!

THEN STOP FEELING SORRY FOR HER AND LET'S GO, BEFORE YOUR HUSBAND SHOWS UP!

I REMEMBER HOW I HAD TO CLAP MY HANDS OVER MY MOUTH TO KEEP FROM CRYING OUT LOUD... HOW I RAN BACK DOWN THE HALL AND PLUNGED MYSELF ON THE BED AND LISTENED TO THEM PASS OUTSIDE MY ROOM AND GO DOWNSTAIRS...



SOB... SOB...

I REMEMBER LISTENING TO THE FRONT DOOR SLAM AND RUNNING TO THE FRONT BEDROOM WINDOW IN TIME TO SEE...



DADDY? DADDY'S COMING UP THE WALK?

I REMEMBER HOW HE STARED AT THEM... AT MOMMY AND STEVE... WITH THE BAGS IN THEIR HANDS... NOW HE STARTED TO SPEAK... NOW THE GUNSHOT BOOMED INTO THE NIGHT... NOW DADDY'S EXPRESSION FROZE...



...HOW HE PITCHED FORWARD WITH THE BULLETHOLE IN HIS CHEST AND THE BLOOD GUSHING FROM IT AND POOLING OUT OVER THE FRONT WALK AS HE WENT SPRAWLING...



...NOW MOMMY SCREAMED... AND FAINTED...



...AND STEVE DROPPED THE BAGS AND RAN...



...AND THE POLICE SIREN WULF FAR AWAY, COMING CLOSER... CLOSER... AS I CAME OUT THE FRONT DOOR...



THEY FOUND THE GUN IN MOMMY'S HAND, AND WE CRIES OVER MY DADDY'S BODY AS THEY DROVE UP IN THE SQUAD CAR...



BUT AN AMBULANCE WASN'T WHAT THEY NEEDED, DADDY WAS DEAD, THEY NEEDED A MORGUE-BAG. MOMMY CAME TO AND ASKED:



THEY CAUGHT STEVE A FEW DAYS LATER OUTSIDE CHICAGO AND SHIPPED HIM BACK TO STAND TRIAL...ALONG WITH MOMMY...

FOR THE **MALICIOUS AND PRE-MEDITATED MURDER OF SAMUEL JOHNSON**... AND THE STATE WILL PROVE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, THAT IT WAS MURDER COMMITTED OUT OF **NEED**... OUT OF **DESIRE**... **COLD** AND **CALCULATING**...



THE TRIAL WAS SHORT AND SWEET. THEY CALLED ME TO THE WITNESS STAND AND I TOLD THEM WHAT I'D BEEN...

DADDY WAS JUST COMING UP THE **WALK** WHEN THEY **CAME OUT**. HE SAW THEIR **BAGS**. HE WAS SO **NAD** AND THEN... **BOOM**. THE **SHOT**... **BOOM**...



AND THE JURY BROUGHT IN THEIR VERDICT AFTER TWO HOURS...

WE FIND THE DEFENDANTS **GUILTY AS CHARGED**!



IN OUR STATE, **MURDERERS DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR**. MOMMY WENT FIRST...



THEN STEVE...



SO LIKE I SAID IN THE **BEGINNING**... **EVERYTHING** WORKED OUT **SWELL**. I LIVE IN A **NICE HOUSE** NOW, WITH **NICE FURNITURE**. I HAVE ALL THE **TOYS** I WANT AND ALL THE **LOVE** I NEED YOU SEE, THE **COURT SENT ME TO LIVE WITH AUNT KATE**...



...WHICH IS JUST THE WAY I'D **HOPED** IT WOULD WORK OUT WHEN I **SHOT DADDY** FROM THE **FRONT BEDROOM WINDOW** WITH THE **SUN** I **KNEW** WAS IN THE **RIGHT PLACE** AND WENT **DOWNSTAIRS** AND PUT THE **SUN** IN MOMMY'S **HAND** AND STARTED THE **CRYING ACT**...



THE END

The WHIPPING

HE WAS A MIDDLE-AGED MAN, SLIGHTLY BALDING. HE STOOD BELOW THE BLARING STREET LAMP, NERVOUSLY SMOKING CIGARETTE AFTER CIGARETTE. FROM TIME TO TIME HE'D PEER INTO THE DARK NIGHT, UP AND DOWN THE DESERTED STREET, AS IF HE WERE EXPECTING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING. HE'D LISTEN FOR A MOMENT, CURSE SOFTLY TO HIMSELF, SHIFT THE WHITE ROBE AND HODD HE'D BEEN HOLDING FROM ONE ARM TO THE OTHER, AND THEN CONTINUE TO ABSENTLY ROLL AND UNROLL THE THICK LEATHER STRAP HE'D BROUGHT ALONG FOR THE WHIPPING. AND AS HE FOULED THE STRAP, HIS MOUTH WOULD FORM INTO A FIST-LIKE LINE, AND HIS FACE WOULD GROW, AND A LOOK OF HATE SHOWN IN HIS ANGRY, ANGRY EYES...

JUST YOU WAIT, WE'RE COMING!
IN A LITTLE WHILE, YOU'LL GET
FOURS, YOU LITTLE *SUCK*, I'LL
TEACH YOU TO PLAY AROUND WITH
MY DAUGHTER...

HE STOOD IN THE LONELY, EMPTY NIGHT, HARBORING HIS FURY AND HIS HATE, AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT HIS DAUGHTER CRYING HER EYES OUT, AND SOBBI...

BUT I LOVE HIM,
DAD! DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND?
I LOVE HIM!

LOVE HIM? WELL, FOR-
GET ABOUT IT! MY
DAUGHTER OF MINE'S
GOING TO RUN AROUND
WITH NO *BREAST*
MEXICAN.

HE'D TRIED TO DISCOURAGE HER FROM SEEING THE BOY. HE'D EVEN THREATENED HER...

YOU SO *HEAR* THAT HOUSE
AGAIN AND, SO HELP ME, I'LL
TAN YOUR *HIDE*! DO YOU
HEART PROMISE ME?
PROMISE ME YOU WON'T
SEE HIM AGAIN!

I... I CAN'T
PROMISE YOU...
SOR... I WON'T.
SOR... I LOVE
HIM!



AND THEN HE REMEMBERED THE BEGINNING OF IT... SIX MONTHS AGO... WHEN THE SPANISH CATHOLIC FAMILY MOVED INTO THE HOUSE DOWN THE BLOCK...

SPICKS? FROM DOWNTOWN?

THEY'LL ALL BE MOVIN' UP, NOW! THE NEIGHBORHOOD'LL BE RUINED...



WE GOTTA DISCOURAGE 'EM. WE GOTTA KEEP 'EM WHERE THEY BELONG!

LET ONE OF 'EM OPEN THE GATE, AND THEY'LL ALL POUR THROUGH!

WE GOTTA SHUT IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...



WHAT WE NEED IS A VIGILANTE SOCIETY YOU KNOW? A GROUP THAT PROTECTS OUR INTERESTS!

WE COULD ALL BELONG! NO ONE WOULD KNOW OUR IDENTITY...



WE COULD WEAR HOODES...

AND WE COULD STOP THOSE SPITTY SPICKS IN THEIR TRACKS...



THEN IT'S AGREED? WE FORM A GROUP AND WE DRIVE 'EM OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

TEAM!

HE REMEMBERED HOW THE THREE OF THEM HAD APPROACHED OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY...



WHEN WE GET ENOUGH SUITS, WE'LL BURN A CROSS ON THEIR LAWN... IF THAT DON'T COMVINCE 'EM, WE'LL RAID 'EM ONE NIGHT AND TAKE 'EM OUT AN WHIP 'EM. WHAT'D'YA SAY, GEORGE?

I... I DON'T KNOW, BOYS. I'M ALL FOR KEEPING THEM OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOODS... BUT A HOODED SOCIETY? I DON'T KNOW...

...AND NOW, ALTHOUGH THE SPARK WAS THERE, THEY'D BEEN UNABLE TO FAN IT INTO A ROARING FIRE...



GRIFES? WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU GUYS? DO YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR KIDS PLAYIN' WITH THEIR KIDS... YOUR DAUGHTERS GOIN' OUT WITH THEIR BOYS?

AN, THEY BEEN KEEPIN' PRETTY MUCH TO THEMSELVES, ED. BESIDES... IT'S ONLY ONE FAMILY! THEY'RE NOT HURTIN' ANYBODY!

YES, THE SPANISH PEOPLE HAD MOVED IN! AND, ALTHOUGH HE AND HIS FRIENDS HAD TRIED HARD TO WHIP THE NEIGHBORHOOD INTO ACTION, THEY'D REMAINED... UNMOLESTED...



HE REMEMBERED HOW AMY, HIS DAUGHTER, HAD COME HOME ONE NIGHT AND ANNOUNCED HAPPILY...



AND THEN HE REMEMBERED HOW, MONTHS LATER, HE'D COME HOME LATE FROM THE OFFICE ONE NIGHT... AND AS HE'D PASSED THAT HOUSE, HE'D SEEN...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D COMPLAINED TO HIS WIFE...



...AND HOW SHE'D LOOKED AT HIM AS IF SHE'D SEEN HER FATHER FOR THE FIRST TIME...



...HOW SHE'D CROSSED HER ARMS DEFIANTLY...



THEY'D BEEN KISSING... ON THE STEPS... HIS DAUGHTER, AND ONE OF THEM... ONE OF THOSE SPORKS...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD FELT HIS BLOOD RUN HOT... POUNDING INTO HIS FACE... CARRYING WITH IT THE COLOR OF HIS FURY... ANGRY RED... PURPLE RAGE...



I... I HAVE TO GO NOW, LOUIS. GOOD-BYE...

I'LL... SEE YOU, Amy!

ALL THE WAY HOME, HIS RAGE HAD SEETHED WITHIN HIM. HE'D KISSED HER! HE OF THE OLIVE SKIN AND THE RAVEN HAIR HAD DARED TO TOUCH HIS WHITE WHITE DAUGHTER. BY THE TIME THEY'D REACHED THE HOUSE, HE'D EXPLODED...



I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO KEEP AWAY FROM SPICKS! IS THIS THE WAY YOU DEFEND YOUR FATHER? ANSWER ME!

LOUIS IS VERY SWEET, DADDY! I LIKE HIM A LOT!

HE'D SHOUTED AT HER...



I DON'T CARE! I FORBID YOU TO SPEAK TO HIM AGAIN! DO YOU HEAR?

I'M EIGHTEEN, DADDY! I'M OLD ENOUGH TO DECIDE FOR MYSELF WHO I SPEAK TO

AND THEN, HE'D SEEN RED. HE'D LASHED OUT, STRIKING HER...

AS LONG AS YOU'RE LIVING IN MY HOUSE, I'LL DECIDE WHO YOU'LL SPEAK TO...



AND SHE'D CRIED AND SOBBED...

BUT I LOVE HIM, DADDY! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I LOVE HIM!

NO DAUGHTER OF MINE'S GOING TO RUN AROUND WITH NO BASTARD MEXICAN.



HE'D TRIED TO DISCOURAGE HER. HE'D THREATENED HER. BUT TO NO AVAIL... ONE NIGHT, AMY'D COME HOME AFTER THREE IN THE MORNING...



YOU WERE OUT WITH HIM AGAIN, WEREN'T YOU? THAT MARTINEZ! THAT SPICK!

I WAS OUT WITH LOUIS, YES!

AND SO, HE'D MADE UP HIS MIND...

I'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THAT MARTINEZ. I'VE GOT TO MAKE THAT BLASTED SPICK FAMILY MOVE AWAY! BUT HOW? HOW?

THE OTHER GUYS AROUND WON'T HELP! THEY'RE NOT EVEN ANGRY! THEY'RE... THEY'RE...



...AND THEN HE'D THOUGHT OF A WAY TO GET THE NEIGHBORHOOD MEN ANGRY... ANGRY ENOUGH TO ACT...

SO HE'D DONE TO THEM... ONE AT A TIME. HE'D PICKED THE ONES WITH DAUGHTERS, FIRST. THEY'D BE THE EASIEST TO KILL. AND HE'D CRAFTED HIS WELL-PLANNED STORY...



HE'D COME FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, ASKING FOR THE MEN, SPEAKING TO THEM ALONE, TELLING THEM EACH HIS SHOCKING NEWS...



...ANGERING THEM... FRIGHTENING THEM. STIRRING THEM INTO ACTION, PRODDING THEM TOWARD VIOLENCE.



AND THIS EVENING, HE'S SORTED THEM ALL TOGETHER... SHOOKED MEN TO WHOM HE'D TOLD HIS SHOCKING LIES...



NOW HE STOOD BELOW THE GLARING STREET LAMP, HIS ROBE AND HOOD WITH THE CRUELLY CUT EYE-HOLES IN ONE HAND, A BURNED DOWN CIGARETTE IN THE OTHER, PEERING INTO THE BLACKNESS... LISTENING.



SO THEY'D AGREED AT LAST TO ACT... TO BAND TOGETHER... TO HIDE BEHIND FELLOW CASE HOODS AND RED-SHEET ROBES AND DRIVE THE INTRUDER FROM THEIR STREET.



AND THEN THEY STARTED TO APPEAR... THE OTHERS... THE ANGRY MEN, WITH THEIR WHIPS AND BLACKJACKS AND ROPES AND SACKS... AND THEIR RED-SHEET COSTUMES, WHITE AND PURE... LIKE THIS WHITE AND PURE THING THEY WERE ABOUT TO DO...



THEY MOVED THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS, LIKE GHOSTS...PHANTOM FIGURES ON A PHANTOM MISSION. FOR ISN'T THE BASIS OF MOST HATRED AND INTOLERANCE BUT FANTASY...



THEY ARE THE DELUSIONS OF THE BIHAT...THE EXAGGERATIONS OF THOSE WHO DESIRE TO EXAGGERATE...THE CONCEPTIONS OUT OF DARKNESS OF THOSE WHO WOULD THROW US INTO DARKNESS AS THESE MEN NOW PROBE IN DARKNESS...SEARCHING FOR THEIR FANTASY ENEMIES...THE OLIVE SKIN, THE DARK HAIR, THE ACCENT



WHITE GHOSTS IN THE DARK NIGHT...DRAGGING THEIR VICTIM OUT OF HIS BED...OUT OF THE SECURITY OF HIS HOME...OUT INTO THE DARKNESS...



THE FICTION OF DIFFERENTLY COLORED SKIN...THE ABSURDITY OF ODLY SHAPED FACIAL FEATURES...THE ILLUSION OF STRANGE ACCENTS...THE MYTH OF UNFAMILIAR RELIGIONS...ALL THESE ARE THE FANTASIES OF HATE.



AND FROM THE DARKNESS, TOO, COME THE SCREAMS OF THE PERSECUTED...THE ANGUISHED CRIES OF PAIN OF THOSE WHO ARE HOUNDED DOWN BY THESE FANTASIES...



THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN, THE SLIGHTLY BALDING ONE...THE MAN WITH THE GRIM FACE, NOW HIDDEN BEHIND THE WHITE MASK...THE ONE CALLED ED...THE PERPETRATOR...THE CREATOR OF THE FANTASY...STEPPED FORWARD, UNROLLING HIS STRAP...



THE SNAP...THE WEAPON OF HIS DELUSION...
THE REVOLVER OF HIS HATE... THE PUNCTUATOR
OF HIS FICION... HOME AND FELL... AGAIN AND
AGAIN... BRINGING DOWN UPON HIS FANTASY THE
REALITY OF PAIN...



DIRTY... UHN... LITTLE...
UHN... SPICK...

THE WHIP-WIELDER SWUNG OUT,
STRIKING THE OBJECTOR ACROSS
HIS HOODED FACE, AND THE PAIN
WAS FELT BENEATH THE COMING...



I TOLD
YOU NO
HATES!

YOU...
OH... OH...

THE DEJECTION MOVED OFF, WHIMPERING...
STUNG BY HIS OWN WORK...
SUFFERING THE PAIN OF HIS OWN
MISSION. HE'D OBJECTED, YES! BUT
HE'D OBJECTED TOO LATE. THE
WHIP-WIELDER RETURNED TO HIS
VICTIM...



UHN... UHN... UHN...

SAVAGE, WILD, ANGRY ANGRY STROKES FELL UPON A BAGGED
VICTIM...A VICTIM UNABLE TO DEFEND HIMSELF AGAINST THAT
FANTASY. UNABLE TO CRY OUT... UNABLE TO BE HEARD...A VICTIM
LIKE ALL VICTIMS OF INTOLERANCE



UHN... UHN... UHN...

ALL RIGHT, ED!
THAT'S ENOUGH!

AND THE VICTIM FELL BENEATH
THE OBLIVIOUS AND LAY STILL AND
UNMOVING IN THE COOL GRASS...



ED! HE... HE'S
DEAD!

YOU...
YOU
KILLED
HIM!

SHUT
UP!
LET'S
GO!

THE SCREAM CAME FROM DOWN THE BLOCK. THE FIGURE
DARTED TOWARD THEM...THE FIGURE OF A BOY WITH
OLIVE SKIN AND BLACK HAIR...



ANY? ANY?

LOOK?

IT'S
HIM!

OH,
GOD...

THE BOY KNELT BESIDE THE STILL FIGURE AND TENDERLY
REMOVED THE SACK AND BAG AND KISSED THE WIDE
STAMING EYES AND WHITE DEAD FACE AND HE CRIED
QUIETLY...



WE... WE WERE MARRIED...
SECRETLY SHE WAS WAITING
FOR ME... TO GET HOME...
FROM WORK... GOD...

ANY? ANY? OH
LORD! I'VE
KILLED MY
DAUGHTER!



SLAUGHTER!



Little Petie Dildo was barely five years old: his voice, when raised in terror, was blood-curdling. His screams of anguish, when he stumbled or cut himself, had been known to strike terror to neighbors miles away, and to set domestic animals to lowing in the fields.

Petie had just come hurtling into the Dildo barn, his raucous voice crescendoing like the wail of a banshee. Tears cascaded from his eyes and his lower lip trembled violently. "O-over to Winsted's place," he screamed. "He's killing all the BABIES!"

Leathery Alfonso Dildo gulped, grabbed his double-barreled shotgun and raised his eyes heavenward. He knew it was bound to come . . . he'd never liked that Winsted feller from the moment he had moved into the valley. Winsted had mean eyes and narrow lips . . . he swung a mighty harsh whip at his draught-horses. A farmer who'd skash at beasts might also be capable of murdering his own three children!

Alfonso Dildo gulped and started off at a resolute gallop, heading toward the Winsted place with little Petie churning along behind him. Across several stone walls the elder Dildo vaulted, his determinations and horror growing with each passing second. "I allus thought Winsted was loony," he thought. "Now he's gone stark, raving mad . . . probably murdering them three kids fer the insurance money!"

At last, with a gasp and a stagger, the two Dildo's sprinted toward the open Winsted barn. One step inside was enough for Alfonso; the sawdust

was swimming in rich red blood, and there was a shattering squeal of agony. Dildo stared with bulging eyes; even as the marfiac raised his axe high overhead he was singing aloud. Then the jagged weapon crashed down with great savagery and a death-shriek hung hideously in the still air. Alfonso knotted his weather-toughened hands to stop his body from trembling. "The BABIES!" little Petie was wailing. "He . . . he's killing them all!"

Dildo felt his flesh crawling with horror. He could stand it no longer: he swung the shotgun up to his shoulder, sighted along its rusted length and pressed the hooked trigger. There was a deafening blast; Winsted whirled as if struck by lightning, spun around so that he faced Dildo in open-mouthed shock, then crumpled forward on his face, sprawling full-length in the bloody sawdust.

Dildo flung away the gun and hurtled forward. The block Winsted had been using for his fiendish slaughter was awash in glistening blood. If only he wasn't too late . . .

A squealing piglet jumped down from the block and zigzagged frantically through Dildo's legs. Alfonso stopped and his eyes almost rolled back in upon themselves so great was his astonishment. There on the floor lay the bodies of Winsted's tiny, defenseless victims . . . the brutally murdered babies he was butchering with such devilish glee. Their flesh was already stiffening, those three little pigs Winsted had been readying for the dinner table . . .

YOU, MURDERER

DON'T YOU REMEMBER? DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW DISMAL AND CHILLY IT WAS LAST NIGHT WHEN YOU WENT OUT FOR A WALK? DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE WHISPY FOG HANGING EMBLY HERE AND THERE OVER THE DAMP, DESERTED STREET... THE ALGATED MOON APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING IN THE CLOUD-ENVELOPED SKY... HOW YOU SHIVERED AND WENT ON? THEN LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT IT. LET ME TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED.



YOU MADE YOUR WAY ALONG THE DARK, EMPTY STREET, LISTENING TO THE ECHOES OF YOUR FOOTSTEPS BOUNCING OFF THE EXPRESSIONLESS FACES OF THE BUILDINGS, WATCHING YOUR SHADOW RIPLE AND TWIST AND LENGTHEN AHEAD OF YOU AS YOU MOVED AWAY FROM EACH DIM LAMPPOST...

SURELY YOU RECALL STEPPING OFF THE CURB... YOUR FOOT SLUSHING INTO THE DARK PUDDLE... THE SPLASH... THE BOASTING SENSATION AS THE MUDDY WATER RUSHED INTO YOUR SHOE... HOW YOU CURSED ALOUD IN ANNOYANCE...



FOR A LONG WHILE, THERE WASN'T A SOUL IN SIGHT. REMEMBER ? AND THEN YOU SAW THE HUNCHBACK LITTLE FIGURE APPEAR OUT OF THE MISTY GLOOM AHEAD. HE DROGGED TOMPO VOAL... MISERABLE... SENT... GRABLED.



SOMEHOW, INSTINCTIVELY, YOU TRIED TO AVOID HIM, BUT HE TURNED TOWARD YOU WITH A CROOKED, LEERING SMILE. YOU WANTED TO HURRY PAST HIM BUT HE PUT OUT HIS HAND...



I SEE YOUR PARSON!
DO YOU HAVE A MATCH, PLEASE?

OH...
SURE...

DON'T YOU REMEMBER FUMBLING THROUGH YOUR POCKETS, TAKING OUT THE BOOK OF MATCHES, LIGHTING ONE, AND CLIPPING YOUR HANDS AROUND THE DANCING FLAME AS HE STARED HIS EVIL-SMELLING GEAR INTO IT...



HERE YOU ARE...

MMMMM?

AS HE DREW HIS HEAD BACK, YOU DID NOT TOSS THE MATCH TO THE WET SIDEWALK. YOU HELD IT THERE... THE FLAME CRAWLING DOWN THE WAXED CARBOARD GRAFT. HIS EYES... HIS EYES BLAZED AT YOU IN THE ORANGE GLARE... GLAZED WITH A PECULIAR INTENSITY AND HIS VOICE WAS SOFT AND COMPELLING...



WAIT! DON'T MOVE! LOOK AT ME!
LOOK INTO MY EYES!

HURRY!

HOW COULD YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THOSE EYES? DIML EYES... EVIL EYES. THAT SEEMED TO LOOM LARGER AND LARGER... BURNING, BURNING EYES...



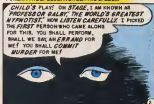
LOOK INTO MY EYES! DON'T TURN AWAY!
YOU CAN'T TURN AWAY. LOOK DEEP!
DEEPER...

AND THE NIGHT SPUN AROUND YOU. THE MIST SWIRLED AND EDDIED AS IN YOUR BRAIN, A MENTAL FOR HOW SWIRLED AND EDDIED. YOUR MIND SANK INTO A SPIRALING POOL... DOWN... DOWN. DESPERATELY YOU TRIED TO SHIELD YOURSELF FROM THOSE FIERCE COMPELLING EYES...



TAKE YOUR HANDS AWAY!
PUT THEM DOWN! IT'S USELESS NOW...
USELESS TO TRY TO FIGHT...

YOU DROPPED YOUR HANDS... OBEDIENTLY... LIKE A STUPID CHILD. HE WAS RIGHT, IT WAS NO USE TRYING TO FIGHT NOW. IT WAS TOO LATE. YOU WERE IN HIS POWER... HELPLESS... UNDER HIS SPELL...



CHILD'S PLAY! ON STAGE, I AM KNOWN AS 'PROFESSOR BARRY', THE WORLD'S GREATEST MYSTICIST! NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY! I PICKED THE FIRST PERSON WHO CAME ALONG FOR THIS. YOU SHALL PERFORM. SHALL WE SAY AN AFFRANT FOR ME? YOU SHALL COMMIT MURDER FOR ME!

MURDER! EVEN THAT HORRIBLE WORD COULD NOT SHOCK YOU OUT OF YOUR TRANCE. YOU LISTERED, DUMBLEY... THOUGH YOUR STOMACH CONVULSED WITH EACH WORD OF HIS DIABOLICAL PLAN...

MY WIFE LEFT ME... FOR ANOTHER MAN... A MAN WITH A TALL, STRAIGHT BODY... NOT LIKE MINE! I WANT REVENGE. NOT NOT BY KILLING HER...



YOU COULD ONLY ANSWER MECHANICALLY... LIKE A PUPPET. YOUR VOICE SOUNDED STRANGE AND FAR AWAY. YOU LISTERED, SOMEWHERE, INSIDE YOU... A REBELLION STARTED...

YOU WILL GO TO HIS GARAGE FIRST! THE RE'S AN OLD MUSTING FIRE CHAIN THERE. YOU WILL GET IT. YOU WILL ENTER THE HOUSE AND BEAT HIM TO DEATH WITH THE CHAIN!



...NOW HIS WORDS INFLAMED YOU...

RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT, HE IS ASSEMBLING AN ATOMIC BOMB. HE INTENDS TO BLOW UP THE ENTIRE DOWNTOWN AREA OF THIS CITY. THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WILL BE KILLED. IT IS YOUR DUTY TO STOP THIS MAN. IT IS YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO KILL HIM WITH THE CHAIN!



BY KILLING HIM... IN FRONT OF HER EYES! HIS NAME IS JOHN STORCH. HE LIVES AT 188 OAK DRIVE. YOU WILL GO THERE... NOW... AND KILL HIM... KILL HIM IN MY PLACE. UNDERSTAND?



Y-YES! I UNDERSTAND!

FOR ONE WONDERFUL MOMENT, YOU ALMOST BROKE FREE OF THE SPELL.

ALL RIGHT! I KNOW! HYPNOTISM CAN NEVER FORCE A SUBJECT TO VIOLATE HIS OWN MORAL CODE... COMMIT A CRIME HE DOES NOT HIMSELF DESIRE TO COMMIT! I KNOW! BUT IF THE CRIME IS SUTABLY DISGUISED, THEN THE SUBJECT CAN BE TRICKED INTO IT!



DON'T YOU REMEMBER NOW HIS EYES CAME CLOSER, BORING INTO YOURS WITH FLAMING INTENSITY AS HE USED A NEW DECEPTION TO SEND YOU TO HIS WILL...

FORGET WHAT I SAID BEFORE. FORGET NOW, LISTEN TO THIS! AT 188 OAK DRIVE, YOU WILL FIND A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL... A SPIE... A COMMUNIST SPY... A SABOTEUR!



...NOW YOU FELT SUDDENLY ANGRY, DETERMINED! YOU WANTED TO DO THIS THING, AS ANY GOOD AMERICAN WOULD... YOU WERE READY NOW...

SPIE, KILL HIM IN MY DUTY... TEST TEST! IT WILL BE A NOBLE DEED! YOU'LL SAVE YOUR FRIENDS... COUNTLESS INNOCENT LIVES... SAY HOWA! RESPECT YOU'LL BE A HERO!



YOU HEARD THE GLOTTING CRUCKLE OF THE HUNCHED LITTLE FIEND, HIS WICKED WEB-SPINNING NEARLY FINISHED...



AND THEN, HE COMPLETED HIS WEB OF EVIL, WITH HIS CLEVER POST-HYPNOTIC COMMAND...



THE EVIL STUMPED LITTLE MAN TURNED AWAY, SNEERING...



BUT HIS WORDS MEANT NOTHING TO YOU, YOUR BRAIN WAS ALREADY BURNING WITH BUT ONE CONSUMING COMPELLING THOUGHT, INFLAMED BY HIS FINAL WORDS AS HE LIMPED AWAY TO THE BAR...



DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU WERE PANTING WHEN YOU REACHED THE ADDRESS HE'D GIVEN YOU? YOU CREEPT TO A LIGHTED CELLAR WINDOW, PEERED INSIDE, SAW HIM THERE, WORKING ON THE BOMB...



OF COURSE YOU COULD NOT REALIZE HOW THE TWISTED ORATURE WITH THE TWISTED MIND HAD FOOLED YOU... FITTING IT INTO HIS DECEPTION, JOHN STORCH WAS A RADIO REPAIR MAN, THE DANGEROUS 'BOMB' HE WAS TINKERING WITH WAS A T.V. CHASSIS HE'D BROUGHT HOME...



YOU STUMBLED TO THE GARAGE... PULLED OPEN THE DOOR QUIETLY... STEPPED INSIDE. THE CHAIN WAS THERE JUST LIKE HE SAID IT WOULD BE. YOU REACHED FOR IT, YOUR HEART POUNDING IN YOUR CHEST...



CHAIN IN HAND, YOU CREEPT CAUTIOUSLY TO A WINDOW...OPENED IT.



DIDN'T YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR HEART BEAT WILDLY AS YOU CAME DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS AND YOU WONDERED IF HE'D HEAR THEM CREAKING BENEATH YOUR WEIGHT...



BUT HE WAS TOO ENROBED IN HIS WORK... HIS DEVILISH WORK, YOU SAW JOHN STORCH, HONEST CITIZEN, AS AN ENEMY AGENT, SENT ON KILLING THOUSANDS. ANGER FLOODED OVER YOU. YOU LASHED THE CHAIN AT HIM LIKE A HEAVY, HEAVY WHIP.



HE TURNED IN SURPRISE... HIS BODY TWITCHING FROM THE STINGING PAIN, HE TRIED TO PLEAD WITH YOU.



BUT YOU DID NOT LISTEN TO HIS LIES... HIS WEAK FUMBLING PROTESTS. YOU KNEW HIM FOR WHAT HE WAS... A COMMUNIST SPY, A RED AGENT. IT WAS YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO SWING THE CHAIN AGAIN...AND AGAIN...AND AGAIN.



YOU IGNORED THE WOMAN'S SCREAMS... DID NOT HEAR HER PAIN, AND TUMBLE DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS. YOU FINISHED YOUR JOB AS A LOYAL AMERICAN... BEATING THE BLOODY CHAIN DOWN.



HIS SHRIEKS DIED TO A FUMBLING MOAN... THEN A FINAL DEATH RATTLE. BUT YOU DID NOT STOP. YOU DID NOT STOP SWINGING THE CHAIN UNTIL THE THING ON THE FLOOR WAS NOTHING BUT A MESS OF COOING SCARLET PULP. THEN YOU FLUNG THE CHAIN AT IT.



THE INCRIMINATING CHAIN... WITH YOUR FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER IT...

IT WAS DONE... YOU CLIMBED THE CELLAR STAIRS, WEARILY...



...LEFT THE HOUSE, AND WENT OUT INTO THE DAMP MISTY NIGHT...



YOU MADE YOUR WAY HOME...TO YOUR ROOM... AND THEN, SUDDENLY YOUR MIND WASHED CLEAN... WENT BLANK... THE MEMORY OF ALL THE HORROR THAT HAD HAPPENED PREVIOUSLY WAS SUDDENLY ERASED. YOU WERE STANDING INSIDE YOUR ROOM...



NOW, WHAT WAS IT I WANTED TO DO? I... I *STARTED* TO GO SOMEWHERE! I... I... OH, NOW I REMEMBER! I WANTED TO GO FOR A WALK! BUT... YAWN... IT'S TOO LATE...

YOU WERE *AMUSED* NOW... ERASED FROM YOUR HYPNOTIC FRANGE. THE FINAL POST-HYPNOTIC COMMAND HAD TAKEN OVER... WIPING AWAY ALL MEMORY OF THE FOUL DEED AND YOUR MEETING WITH THE HUNGRED LITTLE MAN. YOU CRAWLED INTO YOUR BED... EXHAUSTED! AND WAS IT ANY WONDER...



OF COURSE YOU REMEMBERED THE REST... SLEEPING PEACEFULLY, UNWAKING, FRESH AND EAGER THIS MORNING... BLANCING CASUALLY AT THE MORNING PAPER...

BRUTAL MURDER

JOHN STORCH KILLED

LAST NIGHT, THIS BELL LITTLE T.Y. HUNGRY MAN WAS BRUTALLY BEATEN TO DEATH BY A BELL-CRACKED BOLDING WITH A CHAIN. MRS. JOHN SALLY, WIFE OF THE FANGOR AND APPROPRIATE, WITNESSED THE MURDER AND CAN IDENTIFY THE KILLER. FINGERPRINTS WERE FOUND ON THE MURDER WEAPON, WHICH WAS TAKEN FROM THE VICTIM'S OWN GARAGE. WHAT MRS. SALLY WAS DOING IN THE VICTIM'S HOME IS AN INTERESTING SIDELIGHT IN THIS CASE. YOUR REPORTER... *WELL, YOU KNOW... I'M SORRY...*



WOUNDED

WHAT? YOU DIDN'T LOOK AT THE PAPER THIS MORNING? YOU DIDN'T READ ABOUT THE BRUTAL MURDER? WELL, READ IT, MY FRIEND! READ ABOUT THE MURDER YOU COMMITTED... LAST NIGHT... WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU WERE SAFE AT HOME, THEY'RE LOOKING FOR YOU, THEY'LL FIND YOU... ANY MOMENT NOW... ARREST YOU... MATCH YOUR FINGERPRINTS WITH FINGER ON THE CHAIN, DON'T YOU REMEMBER COME IT? DON'T YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING?



DON'T YOU REMEMBER ME?



THE END

As Ye Sow...

YOU STAND SILENTLY, TENSELY, IN THE SHADOWS, AND YOU LISTEN. YOU LISTEN TO THE VOICES AND THEIR EAGER LOVER'S WORDS. YOU LISTEN, INHALES THE LIGHT GUST OF DOOLINIGHT AIR THAT CARRIES THE FAMILIAR SCENT OF HER PERFUME. YOU LISTEN, BUT THERE ARE NO MORE EAGER SOFT WORDS... ONLY THE HEATED SOUNDS OF THEIR PASSION. AND YOU KNOW THAT SHE IS IN HIS ARMS... IN THE ARMS OF THIS MAN YOU HATE... THIS MAN YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN... **YOUR WIFE'S LOVER...**

YOUR NAME IS LAIRD KINBALE. YOU STAND IN THE STAIRWELL BESIDE THE OLD BROWNSTONE'S STOOD, AND YOUR SWEATING HAND GRIPS THE SUN IN YOUR POCKET-TIGHTER... TIGHTER... AS EACH PAINFUL WORD DRIFTS DOWN TO YOU FROM ABOVE...

I'VE... I'VE GOT TO GO, DEAR. LAIRD WILL BE WAITING! PLEASE... LET'S SAY GOOD-NIGHT! PLEASE...

NOT YET, MAMA. COME UP FOR A WHILE... FOR A NIGHT CAP...

I'VE... I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM! I'M LOSING HER. I'M LOSING MY HOME...

ALL RIGHT, DARLING! BUT JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE...



FOOTSTEPS ABOVE... A DOOR OPENING. YOU RUSH FORWARD, PULLING THE SUN FROM YOUR POCKET. YOU MOUNT THE STEPS TWO AT A TIME, FLING OPEN THE FRONT DOOR AS THE INNER DOOR CLICKS SHUT...

BLAST IT! LOCKED?



GO. BANG!

YOU LISTEN TO THE FOOTSTEPS FADING AWAY BEHIND THE CURTAINED LOCKED FOYER DOOR. YOU LOOK AROUND FRANTICALLY. YOU SEE THE NEAT LINE OF BRASS MAILBOXES WITH THEIR LITTLE BLACK BUTTONS...



YOU PUSH ONE... ANY ONE. YOU WAIT FOR THE UNKNOWN SOMEONE TO ANSWER. AND THEN... THE LONG SHARP... IRRITATING BUZZING... THE LOCK CLICKING OPEN... THE DOOR SWINGING WIDE.



YOU STEP INSIDE. THE HALL WITHIN IS DARK AND DESERTED, LINED WITH SILENT DOORS. THE STAIRCASE IS EMPTY, LEADING UP TO MORE SILENT CLOSED DOORS. YOU HESITATE.



YOU STAND STIFFLY... ANGRY... FRUSTRATED... GRIPPING THE RAIL. YOU'VE MISSED FOUR CHANCES. TWO TWO OF THEM... YOUR WIFE, NORMA... AND THAT MAN... WHO-EVER HE IS... ARE UP THERE SOMEWHERE... ALONE...



'HELLO, DOWN THERE?'
DID YOU
RING MY
BELL...?

SOMEONE HAD SEEN YOU. IT'S NO GOOD NOW. YOU TURN AND LEAVE, KNOWING HER INSULTS. YOUR CAR IS PARKED DOWN THE BLOCK. YOU'VE FOLLOWED THEM IN IT... FOLLOWED THEM ALL NIGHT... SEEN HER MEET HIM... SEEN IT ALL. YOU WALK THE SHORT LONELY DISTANCE...



HIS FACE! IF ONLY YOU'D SEEN HIS FACE... EATEN A GOOD LOOK AT IT. BUT, NO! LUCK HAD BEEN AGAINST YOU ALL EVENING. YOU DRIVE HOME, SLOWLY, CRYING IN SILENCE.



THE HOUSE IS EMPTY AND LONELY WITHOUT NORMA IN IT. LIKE A TOMB... WITH THE DRILL OF DEATH. YOU POUR YOURSELF A DRINK. YOU LOOK AROUND, SILENTLY...



YOU SIT DOWN IN YOUR FAVORITE CHAIR... THE ONE NORA BOUGHT ESPECIALLY FOR YOU. AND YOU REMEMBER HOW IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING... WHEN YOU WERE FIRST MARRIED... YOU AND NORA, HER TEARS OF HAPPINESS...

IT'S ALL SO WONDERFUL, LAIRD. I'VE NEVER HAD A HOME OF MY OWN!



IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER YOU WERE MARRIED, YOU REMEMBER, THAT NORA SEEMED TO WITHDRAW INTO HERSELF. SHE GREW COOL...

WHAT IS IT, NOW? IS IT SOMETHING I'VE SAID OR DONE?



YOU RECALL THAT LOOK ON NORA'S FACE, LAIRD. YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS... THOSE STRANGE MOODS OF A WOMAN...

BUT THINGS WERE NEVER REALLY THE SAME AFTER THAT NIGHT. I WAS A FOOL NOT TO HAVE RECOGNIZED IT THEN. I THOUGHT IT WAS SUCH A GOOD THING WHEN SHE MADE FRIENDS OF HER OWN... HELEN... AND THOSE OTHERS...



YOU REMEMBER HER CHILD, THE ENTHUSIASM AS SHE MADE PLANS...

AND A MANDARIN TABLE OVER THERE? I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE IN MANDARIN! OH, DARLING... IT'LL BE SO BEAUTIFUL!

I'M SURE IT WILL, BABY... AS LONG AS YOU'RE LIVING IN IT...



WE COULD GO OUT, NORA. THE BOOTH, ALL AGREE TO STOP IN FOR A FEW DRINKS...



THE BOOTH... THE GLASS... THE BELSONS, ALL YOUR OLD FRIENDS! I'M SICK OF THEM... EVERY NIGHT... NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.

YOU... YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO DO, NORA. YOU NEED AN INTEREST. IF WE HAD CHILD...

NO! NO CHILDREN! I'M NOT READY TO TRY MYSELF DOWN. I'VE GOT SOME LIVING TO DO... A LOT OF LIVING!



YOU REMEMBER HOW THERE WERE SELDOM ANY NIGHTS AT HOME ALONE TOGETHER AFTER THAT... HOW NORA WOULD WAIT BY THE PHONE...

IT'S... HELEN, LAIRD. WOULD IT BE ALL RIGHT FOR ME TO PLAY BRIDGE AGAIN, TONIGHT?

OH... COURSE, DEAR! YOU... RUN ALONG! I'LL HIT THE HAY EARLY TONIGHT.



YOU REMEMBER HOW HELEN TOOK SIDE. AND YOU THRE BACK TO HOW IT SEEMED THAT SHE WOULD NEVER GET WELL...



YOU REMEMBER THOSE FEW TIMES YOU REACHED THE PHONE BEFORE NORA...AND THERE WOULD BE NO ONE THERE...JUST A CLICK...AND THEN THAT AWFUL SILENCE...



BUT YOU NEVER SUSPECTED THE TRUTH, DID YOU LAIRD? NOT UNTIL THAT NIGHT, LAST WEEK, WHEN HELEN CALLED...



SO YOU STARTED FOLLOWING NORA AFTER THAT NIGHT, AND YOU SAW HER MEET HIM. BUT YOU NEVER SAW THE MAN CLOSE ENOUGH TO MAKE OUT HIS FACE.



THERE WAS ALWAYS SOME TRICK OF FATE WHICH PREVENTED YOU FROM FOLLOWING THEN. A TRAFFIC LIGHT...A CLOSING SUBWAY DOOR...



YOUR FRUSTRATIONS MADE YOU HATE NORA'S LOVER ALL THE MORE. YOU BOUGHT A GUN. YOU FOLLOWED THEM ALL THE WAY TONIGHT...TO THAT BROWNSTONE STOOD...



THE DOOR SLAMS. YOUR REVERIE ENDS. NORA HAS RETURNED FROM HER TRYST...



YOU STAND BEFORE HER, AND YOUR HEART BEATS
WILDLY... WITH A JEALOUS PASSION... IN YOUR CHEST...

YOU'RE LYING, HORA! HELEN
CALLED HERE A FEW NIGHTS
AGO. SHE HADN'T BEEN SHOT
SHE HADN'T EVEN SEEN YOU...

IS THAT
SO ALL RIGHT?
SO WHAT?



YOU'D INTENDED NOT TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT YOU
KNEW, BUT THE TRUTH FORCES ITS WAY THROUGH YOUR
ANGRY LIPS...

I FOLLOWED YOU TONIGHT, HORA!
I SAW YOU GO UP TO HIS
APARTMENT! THAT'S WHAT
YOU'VE BEEN DOING ALL
THESE NIGHTS...

WELL, WHAT ARE
YOU GOING TO DO
ABOUT IT?



I'LL KILL HIM,
HORA! SO HELP
ME DO, I'LL
KILL HIM!

YOU? YOU
HAVEN'T GOT
THE BUTS!



YOU ACHIEVE FOR HER. YOU LONG TO
TAKE HER IN YOUR ARMS. ERASE
ALL THIS... MAKE IT AS IT WAS SO
LONG AGO...

HORA...
PLEASE...

DON'T TOUCH ME!
DON'T COME NEAR
ME! I COULDN'T
STAND IT!



YOU HOPE THAT A NEW DAY WILL MAKE
THINGS BETTER... BUT WHAT LITTLE IS
LEFT OF YOUR WORLD BLOWS UP IN
YOUR FACE THE NEXT MORNING...

HORA! WHAT
IS THIS YOU'RE
PACKING?

I'M GOING
AWAY WITH HIM,
LAIRD. DON'T TRY
TO STOP ME! IT'S
NO USE!



PLEASE, HORA! DON'T
DO THIS! YOU'RE MAKING
A MISTAKE! DON'T
THROW AWAY ALL
THIS...

LEAVE ME ALONE, WILL
YOU? I KNOW WHAT I'M
DOING. I'M LEAVING ON THE
EIGHT O'CLOCK TRAIN FOR
MIAMI, LAIRD. THE CHAMPFORD
COME SEE ME OFF... IF YOU
LIKE...



HER BRAZEN DEFIANCE... THE WHOLE SORDID AFFAIR. IT
SETS YOUR BRAIN AFIRE... AFIRE WITH ONE BURNING IDEA...

GOOD-BYE, LAIRD! IT WAS
NICE... WHILE IT LASTED!

I'VE... I'VE GOT TO KILL
HIM, NOW! I'VE GOT
TO... BEFORE IT'S TOO
LATE!



YOU START OUT, YOU HAVE THE BULL.
BUT YOU CAN'T FORGET WHAT SHE
SAID LAST NIGHT...



YOU NEED A DRINK... SOMEONE TO
WHOM YOU CAN POUR OUT YOUR
TROUBLES. YOU FIND BOTH IN A
TINY BAR... DOWNTOWN...



YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT
YOURSELF, BUB. THERE
ARE GUYS I COULD
TELL YOU WHERE TO GO
TO NURSE ONE OF 'EM...
WANT TO SEE, BUT IT'LL
COST YOU A FINE.

HERE...
HERE'S
YOUR
MONEY!
TELL ME
QUICKLY!



YOU HURRY TO YOUR BANK. YOU CRAW OUT MONEY.
LOTS OF MONEY. AND YOU GO TO THE ADDRESS
THE STRANGER IN THE BAR GAVE YOU.



BOY! A PICTURE OF YOUR WIFE. MY
BOY'S GOT TO HAVE SOMETHING
TO GO ON!



YOU HAND HIM THE PICTURE YOU ALWAYS CARRY OF
NOMA... BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL NOMA...



HE SHOVS YOU OUT THE DOOR.



YOU GO HOME... AND YOU WAIT. YOU THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO WHEN NORA COMES BACK... WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY...



WHEN THE TIME GRAYS NEAR, YOU LEAVE YOUR APARTMENT, WALK DOWN THE HALL...



YOU RING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S BELL...



YOU SIT IN YOUR ROOM, FINGERING THE LIGHT BULB. THE CLOCK STRIKES EIGHT. YOU HEAR... IN YOUR MIND'S EYE, YOU SEE THE KILLER SPOTTING NORA... FOLLOWING HER TO HER LOVER...



NORA STANDS IN THE OPEN DOORWAY, BARE IN HANES, HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE DROPS HER SUITCASES AND RUSHES INTO YOUR EMBER WAITING ARMS...



YOU LOOK UP. YOU SEE HIM THERE... HIS ICEY FACE... HIS GOLD EYES... THE BLACK MUZZLE OF THE GUN POINTING AT YOU



THE EXPLOSION, ECHOING THROUGH THE APARTMENT. THE STINGING PAIN IN YOUR CHEST. THE GRILL OF DEATH THAT SQUEEKS OVER YOU AS YOU SINK TO THE FLOOR... AND NORA'S VOICE, BOB'S BMS...



THESE ARE THE LAST THINGS YOU HEAR, LAIRD KIMBALL, BEFORE ...

THE END...

NOTORIOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

**I
M
P
A
C
T**



NO. 15
MAR

SHOCK



200
275
CANADA

SUSPENSTORIES

**JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**



RAW DEAL

OFTEN, DURING THE LONG, DARK NIGHT, THE HALLS OF THE PSYCHIATRIC WARD WOULD RING AND ECHO SUDDENL Y WITH HIS SCREAM. IT WAS A SCREAM OF TERROR, OF MENTAL AGONY, FROM A POOR, LOST SOUL, WANDERING IN A BLACK MERTAL FURGATORY. HIS EAR-SPLITTING YELL WOULD FRIGHTEN THE OTHER PATIENTS AROUND THEIR ROOMS, AND EVEN THE NIGHT NURSES WOULD BE STARTLED OUT OF THEIR COLD TRAINED CALM. YET IT WAS NO MANIC GABBLE, NO LUNATIC CHANT, THIS SHRIEK IN THE NIGHT. IT WAS ALWAYS THE SAME... THREE WORDS... THE SAME THREE WORDS THAT BURST THE HOSPITAL SILENCE WITH THEIR OUVANGING REVELATIONS...

**I HATE HER!
I HATE HER!
I HATE HER!**

THE RE HE GOES AGAIN, NERES, YOU TAKE HIM THIS TIME, NIGHT ROOM SIX! GROSS BOLTON. LORD, IF HE KEEPS THIS UP, I'LL GO OUT OF MY MIND!

THAT SCREAMING IS ENOUGH TO SETTLE ANYONE, SALUT! GIVE ME THE HYPNOF I'LL QUIET HIM...

WARD 7

THERE WAS NO USE TRYING TO SOOTHE THE TORTURED SCREAMER DOWN. THE NURSES HAD SOON LEARNED THAT! A HYPNOTIC FILLED WITH THE CORRECT AMOUNT OF AN EFFECTIVE SEDATIVE SOON SENT HIM BACK INTO A DRUGGED SLEEPING, TALKING SLEEP...

THERE'S HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS EVER SINCE THEY BROUGHT HIM IN, FOR OUT... THREE WEEKS... SCREAMING LIKE THAT... TELLING THOSE THREE WORDS. WELL, DR. BRADSON NEVER THOUGHT CHASING HIM?



BUT FOR DR. ALLEN SWANSON, GREG HOLTON WAS ONE OF HIS MOST DIFFICULT PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS. THE DOCTOR HAD TRIED EVERY THERAPY AT HIS DISPOSAL TO END THE POOR MAN'S CONTINUOUS PLAYING, INCLUDING INSULIN SHOCK AND ELECTRIC SHOCK...



THERE IS HIS **FIFTH SHOCK**. IF HE **DOESN'T** COME OUT OF IT NOW...

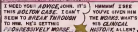
BUT NOTHING HAD HELPED. THE NIGHTLY SCREAMING CONTINUED, AND ALL OF THE DOCTOR'S EFFORTS TO MAKE GREG TALK, TO UNBROKEN HIS FURMENTED MIND, LED ONLY TO THE SAME THREE WORDS...



I HATE HER...

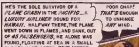
SHHH, YOU MUST TRY TO LISTEN TO ME... TRY TO ANSWER ME. WHO DO YOU HATE WHO?

FINALLY, IN DESPERATION, DR. SWANSON CALLED IN A CONSULTANT... DR. JOHN FRANKO...



I HATED YOUR **ADVICE**, JOHN. IT'S THIS **DOCTOR CASE**. I CAN'T SEEM TO **BREAK THROUGH** TO HIM. HE'S GETTING **PROGRESSIVELY WORSE**...

HHMM? I SEE YOU'VE GIVEN HIM THE **MOVIES**. WHAT'S HIS **CLINICAL HISTORY**, ALLEN?



HE'S THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF A **PLANE CRASH** IN THE **PACIFIC**... A **LUFTWAF** AIRPLANE BOUND FOR **HAWAII**. HALFWAY THERE, THE PLANE WENT DOWN IN FLAMES, AND DANK, OUT OF AN **ALUSCENSE**, HE ALONE WAS FOUND, FLOATING AT SEA IN A SMALL RUBBER RAFT, AFTER **FIVE WEEKS**...

POOR GREG! THAT'S ENOUGH TO UNHANE ANY MIND.



THERE'S **MORE**, JOHN? ONE OF THE REGISTERED PASSENGERS WAS HIS **WIFE**? SHE WAS HIS **WIFE**? THEY WERE ON THEIR **HONEY-MOON**? THEY'D BEEN MARRIED LESS THAN **SIX MONTHS** WHEN THE PLANE WENT DOWN... **SIX SHORT HOURS**...

SAY? HE OBVIOUSLY SUFFERED A SEVERE MENTAL TRAUMA BROUGHT ABOUT BY INTENSE GRIEF PLUS THE STRAINS OF THE EXPERIENCE ITSELF. DRIFTING ALONE FOR FIVE WEEKS. THINKING OF HIS LOST HAPPINESS... HIS LOVE SNATCHED FROM HIM. SYMPTOMS, OF COURSE, ARE DEEP DEPRESSION... SUICIDAL TENDENCIES... CRR... MYSTERY IS?

YES... PLUS ONE **ODD** FACTOR. JOHN. ONE THING I CAN'T **FIT IN**?

IN HIS **ANXIOUS** MINDS AND IN OUR TALKS, HE CONSISTENTLY SPOKE THE **SAME THREE WORDS**, "I HATE HER!" WHO? COULD HE BE TALKING ABOUT?

HHMM CERTAINLY NOT HIS **WIFE**. PERHAPS SOMEONE ELSE ON THE PLANE? PERHAPS... ALLEN, WE'VE GOT TO **PIN IT DOWN**? WE'VE GOT TO **BREAK THROUGH** FOR A **DECENT INTER-ROGATION**? I SUGGEST WE USE **AMITAL**?



MAXIMUM DOSEAGE OF SOUL-AMYL, THE POPULARLY-KNOWN "TRUTH-SERUM," WITH ITS POWER TO RELEASE DEEP BARRIERS WITHIN THE SICK MIND, ALLOWING ITS TROUBLES TO POUR OUT, WAS INJECTED INTO THE PATIENT BUT ONLY THE THREE WORDS RUPTURED FROM GREGG BOLTON'S LIPS.

I HATE HER!
I HATE HER!

WHO, GREGG?
TELL US WHO
YOU HATE! TELL
US EVERYTHING...



GREGG BOLTON:
WE? YOU HATE
WHO?

I HATE... I
HATE... EH?
WHY OH... LINDA?
I I HATE LINDA!



DR. JOHNSON LOOKED AT DR. PERABODY...

LINDA? HIS BRIDE? HOW
COULD HE HATE THE GIRL
WHO JUST MARRIED? IT
DOESN'T MAKE SENSE, JOHN!
IT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE
THE RIGHT KIND OF
SENSE FOR A
PSYCHIATRIST... UNLESS
IT'S INVERTED WORD-
ING... DISTURBED TRUE
FEELING...

WAVE
ALLEN
LET'S
NOT
JUMP
TO CON-
CLUSIONS!



THE OLDER PSYCHIATRIST SPOKE SLOWLY, WITH THE DISTILLED WISDOM OF LONG EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH "OUT-OF-SIDES" HUMAN MINDS...

SOMETIMES WE TANGLE OURSELVES IN BRIDAL COMPLICITIES WHEN SIMPLIFIED ARE THE RIGHT ANSWER. THAT THIN SAYING... LOVE IS CLOSE TO HATE... MIGHT FIT GREGG. KEEP HIM TALKING. GIVE HIM ANOTHER "DOSE"

AS
YOU
WISH,
JOHN!



THE SECOND DOSE TOOK DRAMATIC EFFECT, SUDDENLY OPENING THE FLOOD-GATES, LETTING THE FEMT-UP POISONS POUR FORTH...

TELL US, GREGG!
TELL US WHY
YOU HATE LINDA!

TELL US
THE WHOLE
STORY!

LINDA? I... I MET
HER THREE MONTHS
AGO AT A PARTY.
SWEET LOVELY LINDA...



"BEAUTIFUL GRACIOUS LINDA. WE WERE INTRO-DUCED... WE DANCED... WE FELL IN LOVE. IT WAS LIGHTNING FAST. NEITHER OF US HAD ANY DOUBT, FROM THE VERY FIRST MOMENT."

LINDA, I'VE KNOWN
YOU ALL MY LIFE...
LONGER!

YES, GREGG? WE
MET A BILLION
YEARS AGO?



OUR FIRST TURNING KISS SEALED OUR LOVE FOREVER. IT WAS A TENDER LOVE, PASSIONATE, DIVINE. WE LOVED UNTIL WE AGED WITH AN INFINITE JOY THAT NEARLY SMASHED OUR HEARTS...

DARLING... DARLING...

OH, GREGG...



Funny how convention rules us, only my sense of propriety made me wait a decent interval, a month... before whispering the age-old worn words that rang for us with a magic wonder and newness...

MARRY ME, LINDA BE MY WIFE...

OH, FEE, WHEE! YES, YES, YES...

NO LOVE MORE SUBLIME EVER EXISTED IN THIS CRAZY WORLD OF OURS. SHE WAS EVERYTHING TO ME! MORE THAN LIFE! HOW COULD I TELL YOU? LINDA WAS... SHE WAS... OH... SHE...

BUT THEN, AT THE EFFECT OF THE ANYMAL MOVE OFF, GREG'S FACE SUDDENLY CONTORTED. HIS BODY WHITHERED. HIS FISTS CLENCHED. AND FROM LOVING TENDERNESS, HIS VOICE CHANGED TO A HARSH SHRIEK...

LINDA? I HATE HER! I HATE HER!

PUZZLING! VERY PUZZLING!

THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS STRUGGLED WITH THEIR RAGING SCREAMING PATIENT, FORCING HIM BACK DOWN UPON THE FLOOR...

THAT'S ALL THE ANYMAL WE CAN HAVE FROM HIM TODAY, JOHN. I'LL HOLD HIM TIGHT BETTER GIVE HIM A NEGATIVE!

PUZZLING... NO COMPLETE REVEALING OF FEELINGS...

THEY STOOD IN THE HALL OUTSIDE THE PATIENT'S ROOM, LISTENING TO HIS TINED ONES FAIR...

I HATE HER... I HATE HER... HATE HER... HATE...

WELL, JOHN? IS THIS ONE A DOORER OR ISN'T IT? ONE MINUTE TELLING US OF HIS HEAVENLY LOVE FOR LINDA... THE NEXT MOMENT SCREAMING THAT?

SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED LATER ON IN HIS STORY, ALLEN. I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW. WE'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER ANYMAL SHOT.

EARLY THE NEXT MORNING, THE TRUTH-ORUS LAUGHED GREG FURTHER INTO HIS STORY. THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS LISTENED CLOSELY...

WE WERE MARRIED SOON AFTER, AND LINDA WAS MINE... ALL MINE! AFTER THE WEDDING PARTY, WE HAD NO TIME TO BE ALONE! OUR PLANE... OUR MONTYMOOM PLANE... WAS WAITING TO TAKE US TO HARMY. WE RUSHED DIRECTLY TO THE AIRPORT...

IT WAS TORTURE BEING SO CLOSE TO LINDA. SHE WAS MINE AND YET I COULD NOT HAVE HER...

ONLY A FEW MORE HOURS, DARLING... AND THEN WE'LL BE THERE... HARMY... THE JIGGL PALMS HOTEL... ALONE... AT LAST!

THE MONTYMOOM STAYS FOR DARLING ALONE!

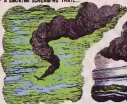
"NEITHER OF US REALIZED HOW THREE WORDS WOULD COME TRUE IN A DIFFERENT AND HORRIFYING WAY, FOR THEM... ON GOD... I'LL NEVER FORGET. ONE ENGINE STARTED TO COUGH AND SPUTTER. THE STEWARDESSES TRIED TO REASSURE US."

"PLEASE BE CALM, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN. WE'RE HAVING TROUBLE WITH THE OUTSIDE RIGHT ENGINE, THE PILOT WILL FEATHER THE PROPELLER. WE STILL HAVE THREE ENGINES. MORE THAN ENOUGH TO REMAIN ALOFT."

"ON AVERAGE, DON'T WORRY, SON! IT..."



"WE PLUMMETED SEWARD, LIKE A METEOR, LEAVING A SMOOKING SCREAMING TRAIL..."



"DON'T ASK ME HOW LINDA AND I ESCAPED. MY MIND IS A COMPLETE BLANK. ALL I REMEMBER IS THAT SOMEHOW WE GOT OUT THROUGH THE EMERGENCY EXIT DOOR BEHIND OUR SEATS BEFORE THE PLANE WENT DOWN, AND THERE WAS AN EMERGENCY LIFE-RAFT INFLATING ITSELF FROM ITS ATTACHED BOTTLE OF COMPRESSED GAS."



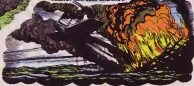
"THEN, SUDDENLY, THE LURID RED BLAZE EMANATING FROM THE COOKED-OUT ENGINE... THE DYING MOTOR GIVING UP THE GHOST IN LICKING FLAME..."

"FIRE! WE'RE ON FIRE!"

"OH, LORD..."



"THE PLANE WAS A FUNERAL PYRE, FLOATING AND BURNING, CREMATING ITS PASSENGERS FOR THEIR WATERY GRAVE. SCREAMS... DYING THROES AND MOANS... THE GREEDY SURF-BLE AND RICE OF THE MOUNTAINOUS WAVES... IT WAS ALL A HELLISH CONFUSED MESS..."



"I DON'T EVEN REMEMBER CLIMBING ABOARD THE RAFT OR PULLING LINDA IN AFTER ME. WHEN WE CAME OUT OF OUR DREAD SHOCK, WE REALIZED..."

"N. NOBODY ELSE SWIMMING AWAY?"

"NO MORE SCREAMS! JUST... SO... SILENCE!"



"AND THEN OUR HAPPY WORDS CAME BACK TO HAUNT US WITH THEIR NEW HORRIBLE MEANING..."

"BRIGHT? WE'RE ALONE? ALL ALONE?"

"ALONE IN THE PACIFIC?"



AS ORSON PAUSED IN HIS NARRATIVE, THE BITTERNESS OF THAT MOMENT IN HIS MEMORY ETCHED IN HIS PAIN-LINED FACE, THE TWO PSYCHIATRISTS EXCHANGED SIGNIFICANT GLANCES, WHISPERING...

TO LINDA SURVIVED THE PLANE CRASH WITH HIM! AN UNEXPECTED FORM! WE HAD ASSUMED, SINCE HE WAS PICKED UP ALONE IN THE RAFT, THAT HE WAS THE SOLE SURVIVOR. BUT...THEN, WHAT HAPPENED TO HER? WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?

HUSH! HE'S GOING ON...

FORTY-THREE PEOPLE BURNED DROWNED.



'WE WERE ALIVE, YES... BUT WHAT TORTURE... WHAT REFINED, EXQUISITE TORTURE, THAT TRY RUBBER RAFT... OUR "NAPALM GATE"... OUR MONEY-WORTHY "IDYLL".'

OH, LINDA, LINDA, MY POOR DARLING... SOLO, WET... SHIVERING... MISERABLE... HERE, INSTEAD OF IN A COZY HOTEL, WARMED BY OUR LOVE.

SOS... SOS



'AND AFTER THE FOG, WHEN SEARCH PLANES HAD GIVEN UP AND NO LONGER COMBED THE AREA, THE SUN BEGAN TO BEAT DOWN UNMERCIFULLY. THIRST WAS A PRODIGING FIRE IN OUR THROATS, HUNGER JOINED FORCES WITH THIRST, BURNING AT OUR INSIDES. WE HAD SNATCHED NOT EVEN A CRUMB FROM THE WRECK.

'GROSS! GROSS! I'M STARVING!'

OH, LORD... HELP US.



'WE PUT THE TRAGEDY OUT OF OUR MINDS. THERE WAS NOTHING WE COULD DO FOR THEM. ALL THAT MATTERED, REALLY, WAS THAT WE WERE ALIVE... AND WE HAD TO STAY ALIVE.'

IT'S RAINING, LINDA! IT'S RAINING! DRINK! DRINK ALL YOU CAN. THERE'S NO TELLING HOW LONG WE'LL DRIFT BEFORE WE'RE RESCUED!



'MISERY SWIFTLY BECAME UTTER WRETCHEDNESS... AS THE RAINS TURNED INTO VIOLENT STORMS THAT NEARLY PITCHED US INTO THE SEA.'



'BUT WORSE WAS THE FOG AND THE CALM THAT FOLLOWED... THE DEADLY MONSTROUS MIND-SMOTHERING HORROR OF JUST STANDING STILL IN THE GREY MIST, LISTENING HELPLESSLY AS AN OCCASIONAL SEARCH PLANE COCKED BY HIGH OVERHEAD.'



'WE'D JUST ABOUT GIVEN UP WHEN A FLEETING FISH BLUNDERED ABOARD OUR RAFT AND WE POUNCED UPON IT WITH BRUTAL GREED.'

KIP IT APART, LINDA! DON'T WASTE A DROP! NOT EVEN THE BONE!

MAM... BUT... GOOD! DELICIOUS...



"BUT AFTER THE FISH... NOTHING... NOT A BITE... EXCEPT FOR THE FEW HANDFULS OF PLANKTON I MANAGED TO SCOOP UP WITH MY HANDS. HANGOVERS ARE AT MY SOUL AS I WATCHED MY BELOVED GROW THINNER AND THINNER, WASTING AWAY."

SO... HUNGRY... SPEED? SO HUNGRY? AND NO SHIP... NO FLAME... IT'S HOPELESS HOPELESS!

LINDA BARE!



"THE FEVER... THE THIRST... THE HUNGER... NOTS GRABING AWAY IN OUR GUTS... THE STERVENTS STRAINING TO SEE A SHIP ON THE HORIZON, A PLANE IN THE VAST BLUE ABOVE... THEY COULD NOT STOP US FROM HOLDING EACH OTHER... WARMING OURSELVES WITH OUR LOVE EACH COULD RITEN BRIGHT..."



"WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA? CAN'T YOU GUYS, DOCTORS? DAY AFTER ENDLESS DAY... SITTING THERE... OPPOSITE ME... UNDER THE SHINING SUN... STARVING... STARVING! SHE STARTED TO HARBLE... TO HAVEL... TO GO OUT OF HER MIND... SHE SAW THINGS THAT WEREN'T THERE... HEARD THINGS..."

HEAR IT OVER? IT'S A PLANE! THERE IT IS! THERE! HONE TO IT, UNDER. MAKE THEM SEE US.

THERE ISN'T ANY PLANE, LINDA! STOP IT! STOP IT!



"I DID ALL I COULD TO KEEP HER ALIVE. HERE, LINDA! MY BELT! WHEN IT? IT WILL HELP KILL THAT EMPYNESS INSIDE."

OH, SPEED? OUR LOVE? AT LEAST NOTHING WILL KILL THAT?



YES, IF THAT PAINFUL ONCEAL PROVED NOTHING ELSE, IT PROVED THAT OUR LOVE WAS UNCONQUERABLE. STEADFAST... UTTERLY UNCONQUERABLE TO ANYTHING! TO THE LAST, LINDA LOVED ME... AND I LOVED LINDA."

SPEED? WHEN YOU WERE PICKED UP, YOU WERE ALONE? WHAT HAPPENED TO LINDA?



"THIRST MUST HAVE MADE HER DRINK SEA WATER WHEN I WASN'T LOOKING? BEFORE MY EYES, IN THOSE LAST DAYS, I WATCHED MY LOVE WITHER... AND BURN IN AGONY... AND SAG... AND WRETCH... AND COUGH UP BILE... AND FINALLY, MERCIFULLY, DIE."

LINDA, SEE MY LINDA.



THERE WAS A HESITANT MOMENT FOLLOWING, A TEAR STOLE DOWN LINDA'S FACE, THERE WAS A WARM LOOK IN HIS EYES... A FAR AWAY LOOK, HIS LIFE TWISTED INTO A HALF-SMILE. DOCTOR SWANSON BENT FORWARD, IMPATIENT FOR HIM TO GO ON...

BUT THEN... WHEN DID YOU BEGIN TO HATE HER? LEAVE HIM ALONE, ALLEN!



DR. SWANSON SHOOK HIS HEAD, STEPHEN'S EYES CARRIED, HIS FACE GREW TIGHT... AGAIN, HE SHUGGERED, HE SCREAMED...

I HATE HER!

BLAST IT! HE'S GONE OFF AGAIN! I'LL GIVE HIM ANOTHER SHOT...

DON'T BOTHER, ALLEN!



DR. SWANSON STOOD UP! HE TURNED TO DR. PEARBODY...

I HATE HER!

LISTEN TO HIM! WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HAPPENED IF I DON'T GIVE HIM...

THERE'S NO NEED FOR ANOTHER SHOT, ALLEN! I KNOW WHAT HAPPENED!



YOU KNOW? YOU KNOW WHY HE CHANGED? WHY HIS LOVE CHANGED TO HATE?

HIS LOVE NEVER CHANGED! THE MIND IS A STRANGE THING, ALLEN... YOUR... MINE? MEM-ORY ASSOCIATION SOMETHING FRIGGS US, WE HEAR WHAT WE WANT TO HEAR, SOMETIMES WE HEAR WRONG!



HEAR WRONG, JOHN?

THE MAN WAS ALIVE AFTER FIVE WEEKS IN A LIFE RAFT, ALLEN. HOW COULD A MAN STAY ALIVE WITH NO PROVISIONS, NO WATER FOR FIVE WEEKS?



I HATE HER!

HE'S NOT SAYING 'HATE', ALLEN! LISTEN CLOSELY! HE'S TELLING YOU WHAT HE DID AFTER LINDA DIED! HE'S TELLING YOU HE STAYED ALIVE!

GOOD LORD!



THE END

The CONFIDANT

THE TRAIN WAILED INKY, CLATTERING INTO THE NIGHT, AND HE STOOD IN THE FLAT BLACKNESS OF THE DRENCHED RAILROAD STATION. THE NOISE OF THE DEPARTING LIMITED FADED, AND THE BLINDS CLOSED IN, AND HE SUDDENLY FELT THE TENSENESS OF THE TOWN... THE ANGER THAT BISTHERD WITHIN IT. MEN BELLED ABOUT HIM WITH FIRE IN THEIR EYES AND CURSES ON THEIR LIPS, SHRUGGING AND TALKING ONE TO ANOTHER AND EYING HIM SUSPICIOUSLY. HE PULLED HIS BLACK HAT DOWN AROUND HIS FACE, TIGHTENED HIS BLACK SCARF, TURNED UP HIS BLACK OVERCOAT COLLAR, AND STARTED PAST THEM... PAST THE MEN WITH THE GUNS IN THEIR POCKETS AND THE CLUBS IN THEIR HANDS AND THE ANGER IN THEIR HEARTS...

WELL, YOU' STRANGER!
YOU JUST GOT OFF THAT
TRAIN, DIDN'T YOU?

Y-YES! I'VE COME TO SEE
ONE OF MY CHILDREN!
ANYTHING WRONG?



JUST GO! WHERE YOU'RE
GOING AND BE QUICK ABOUT
IT AND STAY OFF THE
STREETS. THIS TOWN
ISN'T SAFE FOR A
STRANGER THESE
DAYS...

I DON'T
UNDER-
STAND!
WHAT
HAPP-
PENED?

YOU'LL
FIND OUT!
YOU'LL
TELL
YOUR
FATHER!



HE FELT THEIR HATE AND THEIR ANGER AND HE DIDN'T
LINGER TO ASK MORE QUESTIONS BUT TURNED AND
ENTERED THE STATION WAITING ROOM. THERE WERE
MORE MEN THERE, BATHED AROUND THE POT-BELLIED
STOVE... MORE MEN WITH GUNS AND CLUBS AND DIRT
UNDER AND BETWEEN THEIR TOES...

HE'D BE EASY TO
TRY AND TAKE A
TRIP OUT! I
SAY HE'S MOVED
UP IN TOWN...

JUST LET
HIM SHOW
HIS FACE
JUST LET
HIM COME
OUT TO
EAT...

I NEED YOUR
PARDON, SURE,
IS THERE A
TABLE...?



THEY LOOKED AT HIM... PEERING
BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT INTO HIS
EYES... STUDIED HIS MELLOW-
CHECKED FACE... HIS THIN-LINE
MOUTH...

YOU'RE A STRANGER!
YOU JUST GOT IN
ON THAT TRAIN?

YES! I WAS
WONDERING IF
I COULD GET A
TAUPP



THE CAR DRIVER OPENED THE DOOR TO HIS CAR AND
THE STRANGER IN A HURRY STEPPED INTO THE FRONT
SEAT...

WELL, WHEN YOU GET TO YOUR
BOB'S HOUSE, STAY THERE!
A LOT OF FRIGHTENED-HAPPY
BOBS ARE IN TOWN! THE
STREETS THESE NIGHTS...

I KNOW! I'VE
BEEN WARNED!



THE CAR LEAPED AHEAD INTO THE DOWNPOUR, SWINGING
OUT OF THE STATION PARKING LOT...

FEAR! WE'RE LOOKING
FOR SOMEONE WE'RE LOOKING
FOR SOMEONE VERY HARD...

WHO? WHAT DID HE
DO?



ONE OF THE MEN WITH A CLUB
STEPPED FORWARD...

I'VE GOT A CAR
OUTSIDE! BRACE
YOURSELF!

I'VE GOT THE
ADDRESS
RIGHT HERE!



THE TAXI CAR DRIVER LED THE STRAN-
GER OUT OF THE STATION WAITING
ROOM INTO THE LIVED DARKNESS
AGAIN. IT WAS RAINING HARDER NOW...

YOU GOT RELATIVES? ONE OF MY
CHILDREN?



THE CAR DRIVER LUNGED INTO THE FRONT SEAT AND
STARTED THE MOTOR.

THE BUS STATION'S
JUST LIKE THIS...AND
ALL THE ROADS LEADING
OUT OF TOWN. EVERYTHING'S
BEING WATCHED...

OH? LOOKING
FOR SOMEONE?



THE CAR DRIVER PEERED AT HIS MIRROR THROUGH THE
REAR-VIEW MIRROR...

WE DON'T KNOW WHO HE
DON'T KNOW HIS NAME! ALL
WE KNOW IS WHAT HE LOOKS
LIKE AND THAT HE WAS A
STRANGER IN TOWN...

...AND THAT HE'S A
MURDERER!



THE STRANGER IN BLACK LEANED FORWARD...

DID YOU SAY...
MURDER?

YEAH! MURDER!
THE GUY WE'RE LOOK-
ING FOR KILLED A
NINETEEN YEAR
OLD GIRL.



THE CAR DRIVER BRAGGED...

MORNING'S BRAGG? IT'S
JUST THAT ISS GROVE
STREET IS IN THE
POULTRY SECTION OF
TOWN! YOU SAID
YOUR KID...

HE... HE'S BEEN...
DOWN ON HIS LOOK
LATELY! I'VE COME
TO... HELP HIM
OUT!



THE LAMPS GREW SPARKER AND THE HOUSES GREW
SPARKER AS THE CAR RUMMED THROUGH THE SILENT
SANDY TOWN...

... AND WHEN YOU FIND HIM,
HE'LL HAVE A FAIR TRIAL,
OF COURSE...

TRIAL, MORNING.
WE'LL HAND HIM
FROM THE NEAREST
FREE...



THE CAR DRIVER CRANKED...

HEY! I'M DRIVING,
AND I DON'T KNOW
WHERE I'M GOING!

OH... I'M
SORRY!
TALK ME
TO ISS
GROVE
STREET



THE CAR DRIVER'S EYES NARROWED...

ISS GROVE? YOU
SURE YOU GOT THE
RIGHT ADDRESS?

WHY YES
THAT'S WHAT
IT SAYS. ISS
GROVE? SOMETHING
BROGHT?



THE CLEANING WET WAS MOVED THROUGH THE BLACK DOWNPOUR,
UP ORIENTED SHIMMERING STREETS THAT HARBORED ONLY THE
REFLECTIONS OF THEIR OWN STREET LAMPS. FROM TIME TO TIME
A GROUP OF MEN MOVED IN AND OUT OF THE HEADLIGHT BEAM...
MORE MEN WITH DARK AND FLARE AND GUN.

YOU... YOU HAVE SOME
POWER ORGANIZED...

WE'LL FIND HIM. WE'LL
FIND HIM IF WE HAVE TO
MEET EVERYBODY IN THE
COUNTY. HE WON'T GET
AWAY.



YOU
MEAN
YOU'D
LYNCH
HIM?
WITHOUT.

HE'S A KILLER, AIN'T HE? HE PICKED UP
ONE OF THE SWEETEST GIRLS IN THIS TOWN
OLD JER BARKER'S DAUGHTER. TOOK HER
DOWN BY THE RIVER. AND WELL... THEN HE
MURDERED HER! FEAR! WE'D LYNCH HIM
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT! THE MINUTE WE GET
OUR HANDS ON HIM!



THE CAR STOPPED BEFORE AN OLD RUN-DOWN STRUCTURE HOUSING A DIRTY-LOOKING BAR WITH TWO BIKER-WINDOWED FLOORS ABOVE. THE STRANGER STEPPED OUT OF THE CAR AND FROD THE DOOR...



YOU *BOYD* THIS IS THE PLACE YOU WANTED?

YES! *THIS* ISN'T *ANY*? THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

THE STRANGER STEPPED INTO THE MUSTY INTERIOR OF THE OLD BUILDING AND CLIMBED THE SCREAMING STAIRS...



THE CAR SWUNG AROUND THE CORNER AND ISSUALED TO A STOP... THE DRIVER STEPPED OUT...



THE CAR DRIVER WATCHED THE MAN IN BLACK CROSS THE SIDEWALK TO THE BAR, FEEL IN, THEN TURN TO THE DOOR LEADING TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



SOMETHIN' *FIGHT* ABOUT THIS? WHAT'S A *SWELL-DRESSED* *OUT* *LIFE* *HAW* WANT IN A *JOINT*? *LIKE* THAT?

THE CAR DRIVER BUNKED THE ENGINE OF HIS TAXI AND SPED OFF INTO THE WATERY NIGHT...



THE STRANGER STOOD BEFORE THE BATTERED DOOR OF THE APARTMENT CORRESPONDING TO THE NUMBER IN THE LETTER IN HIS HAND... HE KNOCKED SOFTLY...



WHO... *BOYD*'S *THAT*?

IT'S *ME*, *JERRY*! *YEAH*...

HE WALKED BACK UP THE BLOCK TO THE BUILDING WITH THE SHABBY BAR WHERE HE'D DROPPED THE STRANGER... HE HESITATED A MOMENT AT THE DOOR TO THE APARTMENTS ABOVE...



THEN HE CLIMBED UP THE ALLEY TO
THE REAR OF THE BUILDING...



THE ONE LIGHT STREAMING INTO
THE DOWNPOUR SHOWED THE CAB
DRIVER HIS OBJECTIVE. HE SWUNG
HIMSELF UP ONTO THE FIRE-ESCAPE
LADDER...



...AND STEALTHILY CLIMBED UP INTO
THE RIGHT WHEEL. HE COULD SEE INTO
THE ILLUMINATED ROOM...



THE STRANGER WAS THERE, ALL RIGHT... SITTING ON A
BED... HIS COAT, HAT, AND SCARF BESIDE HIM... HIS
BACK TO THE WINDOW. BUT THERE WAS SOMEBODY
ELSE IN THE ROOM WITH THE STRANGER. ANOTHER
GENTLEMAN, IN A LIGHT SUIT, WAS STANDING IN THE
DOOR, HIS HANDS ON HIS HAIR, STAREING AT THE
TAXI DRIVER...

THEY WERE WHISPERING TOGETHER, THE STRANGER AND
THE MAN AN ENTIRE TOWN WAS LOOKING FOR. THE SELLER
WAS CRYING SOFTLY. AND TALKING EAGERLY TO THE
STRANGER. AND THE STRANGER WAS PUTTING HIS SHOULDER
AGAINST THE WINDOW. TWO FEET, SEVEN INCHES LONG. THE
TAXI DRIVER SWORE...

IT'S HIM! IT'S THE GUY WE'RE
LOOKING FOR! THE MURDERER!



THE MEN AROUND THE POP-BELLIES STOVE IN THE
STATION FROZE, LIKE WAX STATUES, AS THE CAB
CAME IN, SHOOTING...

THEY POURED FROM THE STATION WAITING ROOM WITH
CLATS AND GAMS AND ANGRY FACES. CAR DOORS SLAMMED.
CURSES RANG INTO THE NIGHT. ENGINES ROARED...

O'GORMY! I'VE FOUND HIM! I'VE
FOUND OUR BILL LEFT! HE'S HOLED
UP OVER ON GROVE STREET. THAT
STRANGER THAT CAME TO TOWN
LED ME TO HIM! O'GORMY!

LET'S GO!



FOLLOW ME!

STOP OFF AT THE BUS DEPOT!
GET THE REST OF THE BOYS!



CARS FLASHED THROUGH THE LIGHT NIGHT MEN BRUISHED TO OTHER MEN. MORE CARS JOINED. LITTLE GROUPS WITHOLLING THE STREETS ON THE WAY WERE FORCED UP. A ROARING, SCREAMING CONFUSION OF AUTO ENGINES AND SCREAMING SPARKS CONVERGED ON THE SHABBY BAR ON GROVE STREET.



THE OLD BATTERED DOOR RELEASED ITS WEAK HOLD ON ITS HINGES AND CRASHED INWARD, AND THE ANGRY MEN POURED THROUGH. . .



THE STRANGER SROOK HIS HEAD. . .



HEAVY FOOTSTEPS POUNDED UP STAIRS THAT RANGALED THEM USED WOODEN OBJECTS. SHARING VOICES FILLED THE MUSTY STRUCTURE. . .



THE STRANGER IN BLACK STOOD ALONE BEFORE THE INTRUDERS, CALMLY BUTTONING HIS OVERCOAT. . .



THE STRANGER SMILED OUT FROM BENEATH HIS BLACK HAT. A THIN-LIPPED, BIAS SMILE. . .



THE STRANGER STARTED TOWARD THE DOOR. . .



THEY HELD HIM WITH HIS ARMS
BEHIND HIS BACK. SOMEONE KNOCKED
OFF HIS HAT. SOMEONE ELSE SLAPPED
HIS FACE. SILENTLY...



THEY'D SEARCHED FOR DAYS. THESE MEN. THEY'D HOUNDED
THE KILLER, ITCHING FOR REVENGE, HUNGRY FOR HIS
BLOOD. FEELING WITH ARMS AND PERMED WITH THE
EXCITEMENT OF INFLECTING PUNISHMENT. THESE WERE
RIGHTeous MEN ON A RIGHTeous CAUSE, AND NO
ONE COULD STAND IN THEIR WAY. THEY POUNDED AND
KICKED AND PUNCHED...



HIS LAY IN A RUDDY BEATEN HEAP UPON THE FLOOR.
THE STRANGER. BESIDE HIM LAY A WHITE PIECE OF
PAPER - CLEAN AND PURE WHITE. SOMEONE PICKED IT



FISTS STRUCK OUT. FISTS WITH
FURY AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION
BEHIND THEM...



SOMEONE STRUCK OUT WITH A CLUB.
SOMEONE KICKED HARD. THE TIGHT-
LIPPED MOUTH REMAINED SEALED.



THEIR FRUSTRATIONS AT JUST MISSING THEIR BEARLY
POUNDED DOWN UPON THE STRANGER IN BLACK BECAUSE
HE WOULD NOT HELP THEM. WOULD NOT GIVE THEM THE
INFORMATION THEY SOUGHT. CLUBS. GUN-BUTTS. GRASS-
KNUCKLES. ALL FOUND THEIR MARK UNTIL...



SOMEONE KNELT AND PULLED THE BLACK SCARF
FROM THE DEAD MAN'S NECK, SLURRY SPREAD THE
BLACK OVERCOAT. HIS STIFF WHITE COLLAR WAS JUST
BEHIND HIM - GABING THE BLOOD. THAT JOTTER FROM
HIS TIGHT-LIPPED MOUTH...





PROPOSAL



He had met her at a Gala Dance, wherein had gathered the employees of the Hofmeister Pig Iron Factory. For weeks before, since he first noticed her in Accounts Payable, Marvin Bindleriff had eyes for no one but the slim blue-eyed girl with the upswept blond hair. Silently Marvin had gazed at her – silently he had yearned to meet the young woman named Desire Finch. But Marvin was a reserved young man: introducing himself brusquely was not to be considered. That's why the Gala Dance was such a godsend. True, he hadn't actually *danced* with her – too many others wanted in line for *that* blissful experience – but he *had* escorted her home. In the darkness of the night they strolled side-by-side, and Marvin's heart had nearly burst through his belt when – when – shut with desire for Desire. For a fleeting moment he had even entertained the brazen idea of holding her hand. But it was enough, Marvin mused, just to *over* her!

A week later, after he had wooed and dined her at Ye Voulburger Volhalla, and danced with her at the Raging & Raving Club, Marvin made up his mind. Donning his newest sack suit, he set his stiff arrow hat at an aggressive angle and, his courage screwed up, set out for the Finch home. The worst that could happen, he mused, was for elderly Mr. Finch to say NO when Marvin revealed that his intentions toward Desire were marital.

The slim girl, herself, answered the doorbell, her flashing smile lit the way to the parlor, where her daddy snarled over the ship's arrival column of the evening paper. With a

leaving the two men to their conversation. The way she had snarled told Marvin that *her* answer, at any rate, was an emphatic YES!

Heart beating wildly, Marvin plunged into the object of his wish. His prospects in Pig Iron were good – he neither drank, smoked nor cursed – he had a tidy bundle stashed away in the local bank. That was why he considered himself worthy of asking Desire's hand in marriage.

Old Mr. Finch arose, musing over and over to himself. "The lad wants her hand, eh? It's her *hand* he's come for, is it?"

Marvin held his breath while Mr. Finch crossed the room, opened the double-doors and called for his daughter. Marvin's heart attended to his throat while the girl entered and glanced coyly at him.

"The young man has come to ask for your hand, daughter," the older man intoned. "What do you say?"

Without a moment's hesitation Desire smiled openly at Marvin. Her left hand circled her right wrist and, with a quick movement, twisted energetically. Marvin Bindleriff's mouth gaped awkwardly. Desire had unscrewed her right hand and was offering the real-istic prosthetic appliance to him.

"You have what you came for," the old man said kindly, as Marvin stared at the artificial hand he had been offered. "When you wish to ask for something *else*, feel free to make the request!"

And with that, Mr. Finch snarled and went back to reading the ship's arrival column in the evening paper.

FOR CRYIN' OUT LOUD!

GO AHEAD, MARTY! FINISH THE JOB! YOU'VE GOT TO NOW! KILL HER! TWIST HER FINGERS AROUND HER SOFT WHITE THROAT! SQUEEZE! TWIST! TWIST! TWIST! TWIST! SQUEEZE TILL YOU CHOKE OFF HER SCREAMS SQUEEZE TILL SHE STOPS GLARING AT YOU. SQUEEZE TILL HER LUNGS STOP HEAVING AND HER EYES ROLL BACK, BLIND WHITE, AND HER CONVULSIVE BODY GOES LIMP.



ALL RIGHT, MARTY, IT'S DONE. YOU CAN STOP NOW. YOU'RE JUST SQUEEZING THE NECK OF A CORPSE, NOW SHE'S DEAD. WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE LOOKING STUPID! YOU'VE JUST COMMITTED MURDER. YOU'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE, IN A HURRY...



YEAH! GOT TO GET AWAY BEFORE SOMEBODY COMES ALONG! GOT TO...

THAT'S IT, MARTY! HURRY AWAY FROM THE SCENE OF THE CRIME! HURRY FROM YOUR SICKENING FILTHY DEED! YOU'RE SAFE, MARTY! NO WITNESSES! NO ONE TO TALK! NO ONE TO... TO... MARTY! WHAT'S TRUE, MARTY? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?



I KILLED HER! I KILLED MYLIEB BELSON! I KILLED...

SHUT UP, MARTY! DON'T SAY THOSE THINGS! SOME-
BODY WILL HEAR YOU! WHAT? YOU'RE NOT SAYING
THOSE THINGS? WELL YOU HEARD IT, DIDN'T YOU?
YOU HEAR THAT ACCURSED VOICE INSIDE YOUR BRAIN
NOW, DON'T YOU SCREAMING LOUDER, LOUDER!



I STRANGLED HER! I
MURDERED HER WITH MY
OWN BARE HANDS!
I KILLED...

NO! NO!

THAT'S THE WAY, MARTY! AGREE WITH THAT STUPID
SCREAMING VOICE. ANSWER IT BACK! EXPLAIN!
SHUT IT OFF!



I'M A
MURDERER?

BUT I AGED TO KILL HER! I AGED TO
TO PROTECT MYSELF. I HAD TO...

SURE YOU HAD TO, MARTY. WHY? MURDER? OF
COURSE! CERTAINLY! WHAT ELSE COULD YOU
DO? ESPECIALLY CONSIDERING THE CIRCUMSTAN-
CES... DRIFTING INTO THAT BAR EARLIER THE EVE-
NING, LOOKING FOR SOME FUN FOR A CHANGE.



FINED OF BEING COOPED UP IN THAT
LOUZY HOTEL ROOM. FINE LOOKS
LIKE A QUIET PLACE. HMM... FINE
BAR... ENJOYING THE EYE, TOO...

IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, EH, MARTY? A LONG TIME OF
HANGING OUT. A LONG TIME WITHOUT A DRINK. A LONG
TIME WITHOUT SOMEONE LIKE ADEE. SO YOU WASTED NO
TIME. YOU SAW YOUR CHANCE AND YOU GRABBED AT IT.
YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE THAT, HAVEN'T YOU, MARTY?



HELLO, HONEY! YOU LOOK
LONESOME! WOULD IF A
LONESOME GUY JOINS
YOU? CAN I BUY YOU
THE NEXT ONE?

SURE, HAWKSTONE! SIT DOWN!
I GOT THE EVENING TO KILL!
MY NAME'S MILLIE... MILLIE
BELOON? WHAT'S YOURS?

YOU WERE CLEVER, MARTY! YOU
WERE SO CLEVER! YOUR NAME HAD
BEEN IN EVERY PAPER IN TOWN
A FEW WEEKS AGO, YOU WERE GARD-

BUT THAT WAS AN IDIOTIC MIS-
TAKES, WASN'T IT, MARTY, FLASHING
THAT HOLE OF BULLET? YOU DIDN'T
NOTICE HOW MILLIE STARTED LOOK-

YOU DIDN'T NOTICE THAT SHIR OF
RECOGNITION IN HER FACE. YOU
DRANK AND SHE DRANK. YOU
LAUGHED AND SHE LAUGHED, AND



EH, JOE SMITH? I'M
FROM OUT OF TOWN.
FIND MORE OF THOSE,
BUTTERED...

YES,
SIR!



ONE BEER?
TAKE IT OUT
OF THERE?

HEY, WESTER!
WHAT'S YOUR
MYSTIC NAME?
WELL-HEELED?



QUESTION
HOW'D YOU
LIKE TO TAKE
ME HOME,
MARTIN?

SOUNDS LIKE A
GREAT IDEA, MILLIE!

...YOU FEEL LIKE A FOW OF BIRDS...

WHAT AN IDIOTIC FOOL YOU WERE! YOU FELL RIGHT INTO HER TRAP. SHE WON'T LETTING YOU TAKE HER HOME! SHE WASN'T TALKING TO YOU ANYMORE, SHE JUST WANTED TO KISS YOU.

THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT, "JOE!" YOU ANSWERED TO "MARTIN" WITHOUT SAYING IN EYEGLASS! YOU'RE MARTIN HODGMAN, THE SMUGGLER!

WHY? WHY... I... I...

THERE WAS NO USE SCRAMBLING AROUND, MARTY! NO USE WISHING YOU HADN'T TAKEN A CHANCE AND CRAWLED OUT OF YOUR HOLE BEFORE IT HAD ALL BLOWN DOWN. SHE'D RECOGNIZED YOU! YOU WERE TRAPPED...

I LIKE YOU, MARTY... SO I WON'T BE ANGRY! THE PAPERS SAID YOU GOT AWAY WITH FORTY THOUSAND GOLD DOLLARS! ONLY TWENTY FIVE THOUSAND WILL KEEP MY SWEET LIPS SATISFIED.

WHY YOU CHEAP CHORE! TWO THOUSAND DOLLARS!

IT WAS A WASTE OF INEFFECTIVE TALENT, THOSE NAMES YOU CALLED HER, MARTY. SHE DIDN'T WASTE ONE PENNY. AND SUCCESSFULLY, YOU SAW RED...

ALL MY PLANNING... TISSING MY KILL... TREATING BLOOD... AND YOU WANT TO CUT YOURSELF IN FOR MORE THAN HALF. YOU? A THUMB? A GINGER I MET ONLY AN HOUR AGO...

WAIT! KEEP AWAY! WE CAN BARBARE...

SURE, MARTY! LIKE YOU SAID! YOU HAD TO DO IT! YOU HAD TO PROTECT YOURSELF... HAD TO COVER UP ONE CRIME WITH ANOTHER. BUT THIS OTHER THING THE VOICE ECHOING IN YOUR BRAIN, THIS MADDERING VOICE, YOU DIDN'T IGNORE IT.

I KILLED A WOMAN! I KILLED MILLIE NELSON! SHE'S BACK THERE IN AN ALLEY... DEAD!

NO! STOP IT! STOP IT! STOP!

SOMEONE'S COMING, MARTY! AND THAT VOICE WON'T BE STILL. CAREFUL, NOW! COMPOSE YOURSELF! PUT ON A POWER FACED THAT'S IT! (Whisper) you can't see me anywhere... with you for a stroll...

I KILLED A WOMAN! I KILLED... KILLED...

THIS SCREAMING VOICE... CONFESSING YOUR SIN... SHOUTING OUT YOUR GUILT... LOUDER... LOUDER... UNTIL YOU CAN HEAR IT'S ECHOING OFF THE BUILDINGS AND CORNERS! ANYBODY CAN HEAR IT...

I'M A MURDERER!

SHOT UP! SHOT UP!

FOR GOD'S SAKE, MARTY! HE'S STAREING AT YOU. HE HEARD! HE HEARD THAT CRAZY SCREAMING VOICE IN YOUR BRAIN.

CHECK... NO! IT CAN'T BE!

I'M A KILLER! LISTEN! I MURDERED...

OF COURSE IT CAN'T BE, MARTY! IT'S KIDNAPING!
HOW COULD ANYBODY HEAR A VOICE THAT'S IN YOUR
OWN MIND? IMPOSSIBLE! OF COURSE NOT
REALLY! BUT NOW HE'S STAYING AT YOU!



D-D-D I LOOK I I AM GUILTY! SEE, MURDER! I... I KILLED! I KILLED! I KILLED!

THERE! WE'VE LEFT FAR BEHIND!
SLOW DOWN! WALK! WATCH THE
PASSERBY! WATCH THEIR FACES!
HERE COMES ONE! HE WON'T HEAR!
HE CAN'T! HE...



OH... I'M GUILTY! LISTEN, MURDER! YOU SAID TO...

RUN, MARTY! RUN SOME MORE!
RUN FROM YOURSELF! RUN FROM
YOUR VILE DEEDS AND YOUR
SCREAMING CONSCIENCE!



I'M A KILLER! I'M A KILLER!

RUN, MARTY! DON'T HE DOES HEAR YOU! RUN...



I'M A MURDERER! I'M A MURDERER!

AM, COME ON, MARTY! THIS IS
CHILDISH! THIS IS UNGAUNT!
HOW CAN ANYONE HEAR YOUR OWN
GUILTY CONSCIENCE? NOW WAIT
A MINUTE! LET'S THINK THIS OVER!



THAT MAN... LOOKING IN
THAT STORE WINDOW!

NOW YOU'RE TALKING! LET'S RE-RE-RE! LET'S
MAKE THE ACID TEST. STAND BESIDE HIM. LOOK
INTO THE WINDOW. SEE IF HE HEARS. SEE...



I THROTTLED A WOMAN!
I KILLED HER IN COLD BLOOD!
I'M A MURDERER! I...

GULP!

HE DOES HEAR! HE MUST HEAR! THEY ALL HEAR!
SEE HOW HE SPINS AROUND, STAREING AT YOU IN WIDE-
EYED HORROR.



GOOD LORD, MURDER... KEEP AWAY!

I'M MARTIN BORDMAN! I'M WANTED BY THE POLICE! AND I JUST STRANGLED A MILLIE BELSON! YOU'LL FIND HER BODY IN AN ALLEY...

ALL WE WANTED TO DO WAS TELL
 HIM WE WANTED TO TRADE COPS
 OF THOSE SCRAWNCES ON HIS FACE...
 THEY LOOK PRETTY BAD...

SCRAWNCES ON YOUR FACE, MARTY!
 MILLIE'S CLAWING HADDSOME IF YOU
 WERE BLEEDING! THAT'S WHAT
 DENTISTRY WAS FEARED AT! MARTY!
 MARTY DO YOU HEAR?

WELL TRAINED

YOU STAGGERABLE TO MOVE, GAWKING IN HORROR AT THE SHARPLY NIGHTMAREISH SCENE BEFORE YOU... YOUR WIFE'S BODY, TORN BY A DOZEN BLOODY WOUNDS... HER STAGGERED-ATTACKER CAUGHT IN THE ACT OF STUFFING HER FINGER INTO HIS POCKET... THE UGLY BLADE IN HIS HAND, RED-WET AND GLEAMING... YOUR DAZED MIND FIGHTS AGAINST THIS GOD-AWFUL REALITY... FIGHTS TO BELIEVE IT WILL SOON AWAKEN FROM WHAT IS ONLY A HARPING DREAM... THAT YOUR WIFE, LOVELY, BLUE-EYED, RAVEN-HAIRED MARY, WILL BE ALIVE AGAIN, AND SMILING AGAIN, INSTEAD OF LYING PALE AND STILL BEFORE YOU. BUT THIS IS NO DREAM. THIS IS TOO REAL TO DENY. MARY IS THERE... HER RAVEN- HAIR MATTED WITH DRIED BLOOD... HER BLUE EYES STARE EMPTY AT THE COLD, WHITE CEILING. AND YOU CHOKED THE WORDS...

YOU YOU DIRTY FILTHY MURDERER...

ALL RIGHT! DON'T COME ANY CLOSER! I'LL USE THIS ON YOU IF I HAVE TO...

SIX YEARS A COP, YOU GISSON, AND YOU'VE SEEN IT ALL BEFORE. YOU'VE SEEN THE VICTIM. YOU'VE PICTURED THE ENTRADER COMING IN... ROBBERY... BEING SURPRISED. THEN BRUTAL MURDER. YOU'VE GOTTER DOX OVER IT... GOTTEN MAD, BUT IT NEVER HIT HOME BEFORE. NOT LIKE THIS. NOT LEE SEEING MARY THERE WITH HER KILLER STANDING OVER HER. IT STARTS A SCREAMING, FOUNTAINING, WHITE-HOT HATE RAMPAGING THROUGH EVERY NERVE IN YOUR BODY, AND YOU REACH FOR YOUR SERVICE REVOLVER, CUPPING...

YOU SCUM! YOU GOTTEN @H@P!?



HE SEES THAT DEADLY HATE IN YOUR FACE... IN YOUR BURNING EYES. HE SEES THE FAMILIAR MOVEMENT, WHIRLS, AND PLUNGES THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW. THE SHOCK OF SHATTERING GLASS RESTORES YOUR REFLEXES. A HOARSE GRY SPS FROM YOUR THROAT. LIFE...

STOP! STOP OR I'LL SHOOT!



YOU... IN BARRS, AND A STEEL BLUE SCREAMS PAST THE KILLER'S EAR, HE STUMBLES, GOES SPARKLING... YOU SPIN THROUGH THE BROKEN WINDOW WITHOUT FEELING THE ADDRED PAIN CLAY AT YOUR FLESH...



YOU KICK HIM. AGAIN AND AGAIN, YOU KICK. YOU DRIVE YOUR HEAVY SHOE WHERE IT HURTS MOST, AND WHILE HE'S COOLED UP AND WRITHING IN AGONY, YOU KICK SOME MORE...



YOU FEEL NO SATISFACTION IN HIS PAIN... NO COMPENSATION FOR MARY, JUST SCALING, HOWLING, SPITTING HATE. YOU DRIVE YOUR FISTS INTO HIS FACE... AGAIN... AND AGAIN... AND AGAIN...



FURY! BLIND! UNCONTROLLED! YOU TEAR AT HIS HAIR, POUNDING HIS HEAD AGAINST THE GROUND... AGAINST THE GROUND... AGAINST...



AND THEN THE FURY SUBSIDES. NOT THE HATE (NOT THE LUST FOR REVENGE! THE BLINDING FURY TO TORTURE AND INFLICT PAIN SUBSIDES. YOU STAND OVER HIM... TOM BISHOP... DETECTIVE... DRENCHED IN YOUR OWN SWEAT... FANTASIZING... DREAMING THAT THE MEET IS UP TO THE LAW...



YOU'RE A COP, TOM BISHOP. A GOOD COP! YOU DO BY THE BOOK, YOU KNOW THE BOOK SAYS YOUR JOB IS TO MAKE THE PRISON. SO YOU DRAG THE BROKEN HEAP OF A MAN TO A LAMPPOST AND YOU HANDCUFF HIS WRISTS AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME AROUND IT. THEN YOU FRISK HIM. YOU FIND HIS NAME AROUND IT.



YOU SO TACK INTO YOUR HOUSE WITHOUT LOOKING AT MARY, AND YOU DIAL HEADQUARTERS LIKE THE BOOK SAYS...



YOU WANT AND THEY COME. YOU GO LIVE THE NIGHTMARE FOR SIX, WALLACE, YOUR BEST FRIEND, DRIVING ON IN A MASTER-OF-FACT MONTAGE ABOUT A MAN WHO BROKE IN AND ROBBED AND MURDERED A WOMAN, AND WHEN THE OFFICIAL WORK IS DONE, YOU FEEL SICK, AND BILL TAKES YOU OUTSIDE...



THIS MAN IS STILL BREATHING, TOM! WHY DIDN'T YOU FINISH THE JOB? I'D HAVE KILLED HIM!

HE'S GOT TO BURN!

YOU LOOK AT THE MURDER AND SLAUGHTERED AND ENTOILED FACE... AND FOR A MOMENT, A FRIGHTENING THOUGHT HITS YOU...



BILL, THERE'S NO CHANCE HE WON'T GET THE CHAIR, IS THERE?

I DON'T SEE HOW, TOM... UNLESS HE DIES FROM THE BEATING...

S'MON! HELP ME GET HIM TO THE HOSPITAL, BILL. HE CAN'T DIE... NOT THIS WAY. HE'S GOT TO GO THROUGH IT ALL... THE BEATING... THE INDICTMENT, THE TRIAL... THE CONVICTION. HE'S GOT TO KNOW... HE'S GOT TO KNOW ALL THE TIME HE'S GOING TO BURN!

IF IT'S BEEN ME, I'D HAVE PUT A BULLET IN HIS HEAD.



THE AMBULANCE COMES, AND YOU HELP LOAD MIKE PERRE IN. YOU AND BILL RIDE DOWN TO THE HOSPITAL WITH HIM. YOU WAIT WHILE THEY WORK ON HIM. YOU WAIT A LONG TIME...



WILL HE MAKE IT, DOC? WILL HE?

I THINK SO! HE'S A FRIEND OF YOURS, SERGEANT? A REAL-TIME...?

HE'S A KILLER, DOC! HE KILLED THE SERGEANT'S WIFE... I... I'M SORRY! IT'S GOT TO BE BY LAW, DOC. I MEAN, PHIL? ONE PROCESS OF LAW.



WE'VE GOT TO GO, SERGEANT. WE'VE GOT TO GO.

THE NEXT MORNING, YOU'RE BACK AT THE HOSPITAL... IN THE PRISON WARD WHERE THEY'VE MOVED MIKE PERRE...



YOU'RE GOING TO PULL THROUGH, MIKE! YOU'LL BE ALL HEALED IN A COUPLE OF WEEKS. YOU'LL FEEL LIKE LONGHORN, BUT THEN WE'LL COME... AND WE'LL TAKE YOU INTO COURT...

S'MON, CORPSE LAY... SPE...

YOU SIT BESIDE HIM, FEEDING YOUR WORDS AT HIM...TORMENTING HIM.

THEY'LL FIND YOU **WORTHY OF MURDER**, MIKE! THEY'LL SEND YOU TO **ONE**...IN THE **CHAIR**? YOU'LL HAVE A FEW WEEKS TO THINK IT OVER...



...AND I'LL COME AND FIGHT YOU, MIKE. I'LL COME **EVERY DAY** I'LL COME AND I'LL **FEEL** HOW IT'S GOING TO **BE**... AND NOW IT'S GOING TO **FEEL** WHEN THEY **FINALLY** TURN ON THE **JACK**.



BELL IS THERE, STANDING OVER YOU, HIS HAND ON YOUR SHOULDER...

ARE YOU GETTING OUT OF HERE, WELL, FUNK?

THEY HAVE YOU TWO WEEKS TO **LEAVE**, TOM WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A LITTLE TRIP SOMEWHERE?

NO! I'VE GOT TO BE HERE! I GOT TO **TALK** MIKE ALL ABOUT IT I GOT TO **SEE**...



IT'S ETCHED IN YOUR MIND NOW, TOM...JUST NOW THE LAW YOU'VE SWORN TO UPHOLD IS GOING TO EXACT PAYMENT FROM **WHATEVER** YOU WANT TO **SHAVE**...IT'S THE **SHAVE** YOU'VE GOT TO **SHAVE**...

I'LL WATCH, MIKE...AND I'LL SEE THE **SHAVE** THROWN...SWELL THE ODDS OF HIS **SHAVING** FLESH...HELP THEM DUMP HIM INTO A **FOUR** BOX...WATCH THEM DROP HIM INTO A **SHAVE**, AND THEN I'LL POOL UP THE **SHIT** THEY COVER HIM WITH...WITH **SHIT**!



FROM MIKE'S CRANESIDE, YOU HURRY BACK TO MIKE'S **SHAVE**.

...THE **SHAVE** BARRIER WILL COME AND **SHAVE** YOUR HEAD, WELL, THAT'S SO YOUR HEAD WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE **SHAVE** FROM THE **SHAVE**.

CUT IT OUT! CUT IT!

YOU'LL HAVE TO **LEAVE** NOW, **SHAVE**...



YOU IGNORE THE DOCTOR'S REQUEST...

THEY'LL SLIT YOUR PANTS LESS SO THEY WON'T INTERFERE WITH THE **ELECTRO**...THEY'RE GOING TO STRAP TO YOUR ANKLES, AND IN A LITTLE WHILE, THE **WARDEN**'LL COME IN...

DOO! MAKE HIM STOP!



I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU AROUND THIS **WARD** AGAIN, **SHAVE**!

THE **LAW** DOES! THE **LAW** THAT'S WHAT I LIVE BY! THE **LAW** OF THIS STATE SAYS A **SHAVE**...HE'S GOT TO DIE IN THE **CHAIR**...



THEN, FOR PETE'S SAKE, LET THE **LAW** TAKE IT'S COURSE. **KEEP AWAY FROM MIKE!**

HE'S GOT TO KNOW HE'S GOING TO **SHAVE**...HE'S GOT TO DIE **SHAVING** OVER THE WAY **MIKE**...NO!



THE DAYS PASS INTO WEEKS, TOM HISSON, AND YOU CONTINUE YOUR VISITS TO THE PRISON BARRS OF THE HOSPITAL, WATCHING FOR THE DOCTOR, SNEAKING IN WHEN HE'S GONE...



I KNOW I KNOW! I'M A BREAK, GISSON! THE NURSE'S WILL BRING IN YOUR LAST MEAL, MIKE... ANYTHING YOU ORDER... YOU'LL STUFF IT DOWN, BUT YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO KEEP IT THERE. YOU'LL THROW IT UP AND YOU'LL SMELL SOUP...



THEY'LL EVEN GIVE YOU A BRIEF, IT'S SUPPOSED TO BULL YOUR SENSES, BUT IT NEVER DOES! YOU'LL KNOW EVERYTHING! THAT'S GOING ON, THEY'LL COME AND THEY'LL SAY, "IT'S FINE, MIKE!"



EVEREN MIKE'S GUARD FINALLY OBJECTS, BUT YOU IGNORE HIM... DON'T YOU THINK YOU OUGHT TO GET OFF HIM, GISSON? THEY'LL HELP YOU WALK THAT "LAST MILE", MIKE... TO THE LITTLE GREEN DOOR. AND THERE IT'LL BE! THE ELECTRIC CHAIR! THE HOT SEAT!

EVER AS THE GUARD PUSHES YOU TO THE DOOR, YOU CALL OVER YOUR SHOULDER...



GO HOME, TOM! THIS ISN'T COMING ANYBODY ANY GOOD! THEY'LL STRAP SPONGES SOAKED WITH SALT WATER TO YOUR WRISTS! THEY'LL LISTEN, MIKE. I'LL BE BACK AGAIN! I'LL TELL YOU HOW YOU'LL SWEAT WHEN THAT FIRST TEN-THOUSAND VOLT SHOCK HITS YOU.

THE BROODING OBSESSION THAT STRIPS YOUR MIND HAS YOU TOTTERING ON THE BRINK OF MADNESS, TOM HISSON. YOUR TORTURED DREAMS ARE AN UNENDING REPETITION OF THE RABBING THERE YOU'VE COME THROUGH DURING THE DAY.



EVERY NERVE... EVERY PARTICLE OF FLESH BURNED... YOU'LL EVEN SMELL YOURSELF BURNING... HEAT... MIKE! YOU'LL DIE... BURNED ALIVE BY THE LAST...

AND IN THE MOMENTS OF YOUR FADING... WHEN YOU WACH... THERE... AND... AND... AND... THERE, AND YOU REMEMBER... IT STARTS... ALL OVER AGAIN...



WHEN THE STENCH OF YOUR BEASTING FLESH FILLS THE EXECUTION CHAMBER, I'LL KNOW MANY IS AT PEACE IN HIS GRAVE, MIKE...

THE MOMENT YOU ENTER THE HOSPITAL THAT MORNING, YOU FEEL THE FENCE ANGLING AWAY ABOUT THE PLACE, BILL COMES RUNNING DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR WHAT'S HAPPENED ON HIS FACE...



BILL? IS IT MIKE PERIOD? YEAR? HE ESCAPED... FIVE MINUTES AGO... THEY THINK HE'S STILL IN THE BUILDING...

THE MEN LEAVED YOU LIMP... STUNNED... A MOMENT LATER YOU FORCE YOURSELF TO RUN AFTER BILL... EATON UP WITH HIM... GASP AN ANGRY QUESTION...



HOW IN BLAZES SHOULD I KNOW NOW? I WAS HOME WHEN I GOT HERE!

WHOSE FAMILY WAS IT, BILL? I'VE GOT TO KNOW! I'LL...

FOURTS... FOUR FORTS... THE WAY YOU KEPT AT HIM WAS WORSE THAN GOING TO THE CHAIR. HE JUST COULDN'T TAKE IT ANYMORE. THE DOC SAID HE WAS CRAZY WITH FEAR...



I ONLY TOLD HIM WHAT THE LAP WAS GOING TO DO...

SUDDENLY, THERE'S A MAGNIFIC KALEIDOSCOPE OF FACES WHIRLING IN YOUR TWISTED BRAIN... SCORLINS, LEERINS, LAUGHING FROG. AND THEY'RE ALL MIKE PERRO... MORDING YOU... TORMENTING YOU...



YOU KNOW WHAT HE DID TO MARY? HE'S GOT TO PAY FOR THAT! HE'S NOT GOING TO CREAT THE LAW!

LOOK! THERE HE GOES!

MIKE DASHES MADLY FOR THE HOSPITAL ENTRANCE. BILL LIFTS HIS REVOLVER...



HOLD IT, MIKE! STOP! OR I'LL SHOOT...

NO, YOU DON'T, BILL! YOU CAN'T SHOOT HIM! HE'S GOT TO DIE IN THE CHAIR! HE'S GOT TO BURN...

YOU SCREAM AT MIKE AS HE DASHES DOWN THE HOSPITAL STEPS... AND YOU DELIBERATELY GET BETWEEN HIM AND BILL SO BILL CAN'T SHOOT...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE!

GET OUT OF MY WAY, TOM!

OVER AND OVER AND OVER YOU CHATTER THE WORDS THAT DRIVE MIKE PERRO DOWN THE SUBWAY HOLE LIKE A SCARED HAREBUT SCAMPERING DOWN A HOLE...



YOU'RE GOING TO BURN, MIKE!

THE SUBWAY STAIRS RUSH UP BENEATH YOUR POUNDING FEET. YOU REACH THE PLATFORM IN TIME TO SEE MIKE CLIMBING DOWN TO THE TRACKS...



FOR GOD'S SAKE... LET ME GET A SHOT AT HIM, TOM!

HOT HOT HOT THAT MAY! IT'S GOT TO BE BY LAW! HE'S GOT TO BURN...

MIKE STARTS ACROSS THE TRACKS TO THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM. YOU WANT TO CLIMB DOWN AFTER HIM, BUT BILL HOLDS YOU IN A DEATH GRIP...



"DON'T BE A FOOL!"

"LE' ME GO! LE' ME GET HIM!"

YOU SEE HIM TURN BACK... HESITATE... STUMBLE OVER HIS OWN FEET IN HIS BAYWARD DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO REACH SAFETY. YOU SEE THE WILD LOOK OF TERROR ON HIS FACE AS HE FALLS...



SKREEEE

AND AS THE TRAIN PASSES OVER HIM, YOU SEE THE BLINDING BLUE SPARKS... SMELL THE STENCH OF BURNING FLESH...

THREE CARS PASS OVER MIKE'S BODY BEFORE THE TRAIN BRINGS TO A STOP. YOU KEEP STARING STUPIDLY AT THE RED GROUND-UP MEAT THAT WAS ONCE A MAN...



"WELL... THAT... CHOSE... SAVES THE STATE THE TROUBLE..."

"DID HE GREAT FOR LARP, BILL? DID HE? DID HE?"

YOUR VOICE IS HIGH-PITCHED... ALMOST A SCREECH...

"WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES IT MAKE? TOM? GET HOLD OF YOURSELF!"

"HE'S DEAD! HE'S DEAD!"



AND EVEN YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR OWN VOICE, TOM BORDEN - IT SOUNDS LIKE THE VOICE OF A MAD MAN

"AND I'LL NEVER KNOW? I'LL NEVER KNOW IF HE JUMPED ON THE THIRD RAIL... OR THE TRAIN KILLED HIM FIRST? I'LL NEVER KNOW!"



YOU SEE MIKE REACH THE OPPOSITE PLATFORM... SEE THE BURNING FEAR IN HIS FACE AS A RUMBLING BOARDSIDE NOISE ENDS IN THE GREAT Cavern. YOU SEE THE STEEL MONSTER TEARING OUT OF THE YAWNING TUNNEL...



"GET BACK, YOU IDIOT..."

YOU SEE HIM SPRING ACROSS THE SPINNING RAILS... REACHING OUT... CLAWING BLINDLY FOR SOMETHING TO PULL HIMSELF UP. HIS SCREAMS AND THE SCREAM OF WHEEL ON TRACK COMBINE IN A SINGLE NERVE - SHATTERING SOUND THAT BITE YOUR TEETH ON EDGE



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**THRILLING TALES OF
TENSION**
IN THE
EC TRADITION!



BAV

...MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

A LITTLE WHILE AGO, I STOOD BESIDE MY BROTHER MARK IN THE MUSTY ANCIENT CHAMBER OF THE STATE SUPREME COURT, WHILE A HUNDRED CURIOUS RESISTFUL ANGRY ONLOOKERS STARED AT US. I FELT PUNISHED WITH SHAME, BUT MARK JUST LOOKED BACK AT THEM DEFIANTLY, SHEERLY RETURNING STARE FOR STARE. A MENACING DRONE HISSING IN THE COURTROOM, STILLED FINALLY BY THE RAPING SNAKE OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE. AND MARK REPEATED HIS LEATHROME CONFESSION... LAUGHED OUT HIS HORRIBLE ADMISSION... TAUNTING THE COURT AND THE SPECTATORS AND ME...

YES, I KILLED HER! I CHOKED HER WITH THESE TWO STRONG HANDS TILL HER FACE TURNED BLUE... TILL HER EYES BULGED FROM THEIR SOCKETS... BUT I TOLD YOU ALL THAT, YES, I DESERVE TO DIE. I WANT YOU TO EXECUTE ME. I DARE YOU.

WE, WE CAN'T EXECUTE YOU, IN ALL JUSTICE WE CAN'T! OH, LORD... WE ARE FORCED TO LET THIS MONSTER GO FREE!



MY OWN VOICE SOUNDED SHRILL IN MY EARS AS I SHOOKED TO MAKE MYSELF HEARD ABOVE MARK'S BOOING LAUGHTER...

HE MURDERED ALICE! I WATCHED HIM DO IT! YOU'VE GOT TO DESTROY HIM! YOU'VE GOT TO!

THIS COURT IS HELPLESS, FRANK DORAN! OUR HANDS ARE TIED! HIS EXECUTION WOULD NOT BE JUST! YOU KNOW THAT YOUR BROTHER IS BEYOND THE LAW!



SO, ALTHOUGH THREE JURIES HAD FOUND MY BROTHER GUILTY OF MURDER IN THE FIRST DEGREE, MARK DORAN WAS ABLE TO WALK OUT OF THAT COURT OF LAST RESORT AS A FREE MAN, PROTECTED FROM THE SNARLING SPECTATORS BY A GUARD PLANKING HIM ON ONE SIDE... ME ON THE OTHER...



THE GUARD ACCUSED MARK AND ME TO OUR WAITING CAR AND WATCHED US DRIVE OFF, SHAKING HIS HEAD. ALL THE WAY HOME, I COULD FEEL MARK LOOKING AT ME WITH THAT HEARTLESS SMILE...

ALICE LOVED YOU AND DISPISED ME. IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY. **EVERYONE** LOVED YOU AND DISPISED ME. I NEVER REALLY CARED ABOUT IT TILL WE MET ALICE...

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN ANY GOOD, MARK! YOUR MIND HAS ALWAYS BEEN **WARRIED - EVIL!** THAT'S WHY YOU'RE **HATED!**



IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN THAT WAY WITH MARK AND ME. EVER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN, THERE WAS THAT TIME WHEN HE TRIED TO TAKE MY SAILBOAT FROM ME, IT'D FOUGHT TO KEEP IT, AND OUR FATHER CAME RUNNING...



MARK'S INSOLENT SCHOOL HAD IMPRISONED FATHER. HE'D FLOWN INTO A BLIND RAGE. HE'D SLAPPED MARK AND CALLED HIM NAMES, BUT MARK WAS ONLY GLOWRED DARKLY AT HIM. MARK WOULDN'T GIVE FATHER THE SATISFACTION OF SEEING HIM CRY.

YOU **ROTTER** LITTLE **SNEAK!** YOU **TWISTED** HEARTLESS **LITTLE** **FRANK!**



I'D WEPT FOR FRANK. FOR THE BEATING FATHER HAD GIVEN HIM, AND FATHER HAD COMFORTED ME. PUT HIS ARM AROUND MY SHOULDER, AND TEARS HAD FILLED HIS EYES AS WE WALKED TO THE HOUSE.

FORGIVE ME, SON. I NEVER THOUGHT I'D STRIKE ONE OF YOU IN ANGER. IT HURTS ME - DEEP INSIDE... MORE THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW!



YES, I HATED MARK. I HATED HIM WITH ALL MY HEART. AND YET I HAD TO STAY WITH HIM. I COULDN'T HELP MYSELF. HE WAS MY BROTHER.

I LOVED HER TOO, FRANK? I COULDN'T STAND HER BEING IN YOUR ARMS WHEN I LOVED HER SO MUCH! I TOLD YOU THAT BUT YOU WOULDN'T LISTEN. THAT'S WHY I KILLED HER. NOW SHE'S DEAD, AND ANYTHING OF US HAVE HER.

YOU DIDN'T LOVE ALICE, MARK. YOU ONLY **WANTED** HER BECAUSE SHE WAS **MINE**, JUST AS YOU'VE ALWAYS **WANTED EVERYTHING** THAT WAS **MINE**.



MARK HAD DELIBERATELY SMASHED THE BOAT. I'D LOOKED AT FATHER THEN, AND SUDDENLY REALIZED THAT HE HATED MARK TOO...

I GAVE YOU EACH A SAILBOAT, BUT YOU WEREN'T SATISFIED. YOU BITTERFUL WRETCH, YOU **BORE** YOUR BOAT AND COULDN'T WAIT TO **BREAK FRANK'S!**



WHEN WE'D REACHED THE HOUSE, FATHER'D STOPPED US. HE'D LOOKED AT ME WITH A TROUBLED FAN-ASSKY EXPRESSION.

WHATEVER HAPPENS, FRANK - ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT YOUR FATHER LOVED YOU...



I HADN'T QUITE UNDERSTOOD WHAT FATHER'D MEANT... NOT UNTIL DINNER.TIME. MOTHER'D CALLED HIM TO THE TABLE BUT HE'D NOT ANSWERED...



I'D CRACKED ON FATHER'S DOOR AND RECEIVED NO ANSWER... AND OPENED IT, ONLY TO FREEZE IN HORROR AT THE SIGHT THAT GREETED ME. MY FATHER... HANGING FROM THE CHANDELIER... I SUICIDE!



MY HEAD HAD SPUN AND I'D HAVE PAINTED BUT FOR THE CHUCKLING MIRTH-FILLED VOICE AT MY SIDE. ALL AT ONCE I KNEW FATHER HAD TAKEN HIS LIFE BECAUSE OF MARK... AND MARK WAS DEAD...



MOTHER'S CAME ON THE RUN AT MARK'S OUTCURE SHE'S ALWAYS DOTES ON MARK. SHE LOOKED AT FATHER HANGING THERE... TURNED TO ME... AND SCREAMED.



I'D CRIED FOR FATHER... AND I'D MISSED HIM SO MUCH... I COULD FINALLY NO LONGER STAND THE CHAWING ACHE OF NOT HAVING HIM NEAR ME. I'D YEARNED TO BE WITH HIM, EVEN IN DEATH. THEN, ONE DAY, AS MARK AND I WALKED ON THE BRIDGE OVER OUR POND, I'D MADE UP MY MIND.



I'D HURLED MYSELF OVER THE RAIL INTO THE DEEP BREEN WATER, WANTING TO DIE... WANTING TO BE DEAD RATHER THAN LIVE IN THE SAME WORLD WITH MY BROTHER... WITHOUT MY FATHER. BUT BEFORE I COULD SINK, MARK'S STRONG ARM WAS AROUND MY NECK, KEEPING MY HEAD ABOVE WATER...



MARK HAD PULLED ME TO SHORE, AND I'D SAT SHAKEN AND SICK, HATING HIM FOR HAVING CHEATED ME INTO LIVING ON.



GRADUALLY, I'D GOTTEN OVER THE GRIEF OF MY FATHER'S DEATH, BUT I'D GROWN TO HATE MARK EACH DAY, JUST AS HIS CRUELTY HAD GROWN. I RECALL ONE AUTUMN DAY, AS WE WERE BURNING LEAVES IN THE INCINERATOR OUT BACK, MOM'S PERSIAN CAT HAD COME UP TO MARK, PURRING AND PURRING AGAINST HIS LEG.



HELLO, KITT!

MARK PUT HIM DOWN! MARK! FOR GOD'S SAKE!

AS TIME WENT ON, MOTHER HAD COME TO HATE MARK AS I DID, ALTHOUGH SHE'S NEVER ADMITTED IT. ONE NIGHT, AS WE WERE DRIVING GLORIA HOME FROM A PARTY,

MARK FOR PETER'S SAKE! YOU'VE GOT NO RIGHT TO SUSPECT ANYTHING LIKE THAT TO A DECENT GIRL!

IT'S OKAY FOR OTHER GUYS, MARK. BUT I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH! GET OUT! GET OUT OF MY CAR.



AND THE NEXT DAY, A POLICEMAN HAD COME TO OUR HOUSE AND ARRESTED MARK. BUT THERE'S BEEN NO REASON FOR ME TO TESTIFY AGAINST MARK. HE READILY ADMITTED HIS GUILT...

SURE I HIT HER? I'S DO IT AGAIN IF I HAD THE CHANCE! SO ON! BOOM! ALLTHROW ME IN JAIL!

YOU'VE BURNED THIS GIRL'S FACE, MARK! YOU'VE RUINED OUT SEVERAL OF HER FEETH! I WANT TO THROW YOU IN JAIL!



BUT NOW CAN I? YOUR SON SHOULD BE CHASED UP LIKE AN ANIMAL, HIS DEATH BUT THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO - NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO! I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU AND FRANK.



I'LL PAY FOR WHAT MARK DID! I'LL GO ON PAYING TILL THE DAY I DIE!

"TILL THE DAY I DIE," SHE SAID. IT WAS LESS THAN A WEEK LATER THAT I'D AWAKENED FROM A TROUBLED SLEEP, FEELING NERVOUS AND PARTIALLY PARALYZED.

MARK! I SMELL... COUGH... GAS!



BEFORE I COULD STOP HIM, HE'D THROWN THE CAT INTO THE LEAPING FLAMES. MOTHER CAME RUNNING AT THE SOUND OF THE POOR ANIMAL'S SHRIEKS OF PAIN.

I NEVER BELIEVED THIS OF YOU, MARK! BUT THIS TIME, I CAN'T YOUR FATHER WAS RIGHT! YOU ARE NO GOOD! YOU'RE MEAN, BRUTALLY MEAN! OH, WHY WAS I CURSED WITH A SON LIKE YOU?



GLORIA TUMBLED FROM THE CAR, STUNNED AND BLEEDING FROM HER BELLY WHERE MARK HAD STRUCK HER FURIOUSLY.

SHE'S MARK! MARK! YOU JUST CAN'T LEAVE HER HERE... ALIVE FROM HOME!

OH, CAN'T I? JUST WATCH ME!



WE'D RUN TO THE KITCHEN. MOTHER WAS THERE,
SLAMMED OVER THE KITCHEN STOVE.



MOTHER'S LEFT EVERYTHING TO ME, BUT, THOUGH MY MIND
FOR MARK WAS GREAT, I SHARED EVERYTHING WITH HIM...
EVEN MY POPULARITY. EVEN THOUGH EVERYONE DESPISED
HIM, HE WAS INVITED EVERYWHERE WITH ME.



I'D FALLEN IN LOVE WITH ALICE BENSON... HEAD
OVER HEELS. ON THE WAY HOME FROM THE PARTY,
I TOLD MARK...



MOTHER'S LEFT A NOTE
FOR ME...



I'D LOOKED INTO MARK'S
EYES, HOPING TO SEE SOME
SIGN OF REMORSE, BUT HE'D
ONLY SMILED AND SMIRKED IN
COLD INDIFFERENCE.



THAT WAS FOUR MONTHS AGO. I WAS TWENTY-EIGHT
WHEN I MET ALICE. I HAD THE SAME LONGING AS ANY
MAN MY AGE, TO BE MARRIED, TO LOVE, TO BE LOVED.



ALICE AND I HAD SEEN A GOOD DEAL OF EACH OTHER
BEFORE I COULD BRING MYSELF TO PROPOSE TO HER UP
TO THAT TIME, MARK HAD SHOWN NO INTEREST IN MURRAY
ALICE HAD ACTED AS IF MARK DIDN'T EVEN EXIST. BUT
WHEN I ASKED...



MARK HAD INTERRUPTED OUR TENDER LOVE SCENE. HE SHOWED ME A SIDE, GRABBED ALICE.

I'VE STOOD BY AND WATCHED, BUT I'VE WANTED YOU TILL I ACHED, ALICE! I LOVE YOU! WE CAN'T HAVE YOU! I WON'T LET YOU!

LET ME... GO... MARK! PLEASE!



HE'S TRIED TO KISS HER, BECAUSE ALICE WAS MINE. MARK WANTED HER.

YOU FILTHY! YOU DISGRACING FILTHY!

WHY, YOU DIRTY LITTLE



MARK'S STRONG HANDS HAD FLOWN TO ALICE'S THROAT, CUTTING OFF HER AIR. CRUSHING. I FOUGHT VAINLY TO BREAK HIS HOLD...

LET HER GO, YOU DIRTY DIRTY! YOU'RE KILLING HER!



SHE WAS DEAD. MARK HAD KILLED HER. HE'D EVEN GIVEN A FULL CONFESSION. HE'D KNOWN THEY COULDN'T DO A THIRD TO HIM., THAT HE WAS BEYOND THE LAW. JUST A LITTLE WHILE AGO, WE CAME HOME FROM THAT COURTROOM

FOR ALL THESE YEARS, YOU'VE HAD A HOLD ON ME. YOU'VE DEFIED EVERY LAW OF DECENTY ONLY BECAUSE THE DECENT PEOPLE DIDN'T WANT TO HURT ME...

C'NON! I NEED A SHAVE!



AND I TOOK MY STRAIGHT-RAZOR AS MARK LAUGHED.

YOU WENT TO KILL ME. FRANK! DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH! YOU HAVEN'T THE GUTS! HOW NOW COULD YOU KILL ME?

LIKE THIS, MARK?



... AND I SLIT MY OWN THROAT!

AND I STOOD BESIDE MARK AS HE LATHERED HIS FACE AND WHEELED HIS STRAIGHT-AZOR AS COOLY AND AS CALMLY AS IF NOTHING HAD EVER HAPPENED...

WHAT'LL WE DO TONIGHT, FRANK? NOW ABOUT A SHOW!

YOU'RE BEYOND THE LAW, MARK! BUT JUST THE SAME YOU YOU'VE GOT TO BE PUNISHED FOR MURDER!



NOW I LIE BESIDE MARK, MY LIFE EBBING AWAY WITH EACH SCARLET DROP THAT OOOZES FROM MY SLASHED THROAT. AND I KNOW THAT JUSTICE IS DONE. FOR JUST AS SURELY AS IN LIFE, SO IN DEATH, MARK AND I WILL BE IRSEPARABLE. FOR IT IS MARK'S LIFE'S BLOOD TOO, THAT GUSHES FROM MY WOUND...



AND SO IT IS WITH GRAMSCIE TWINS?

THE END

The HAZING

YOU MOVE AROUND THE FRATERNITY HOUSE OWNER TABLE ANYWAY, STOPPING AT EACH OF THE BROTHERS, WAITING FOR THEM TO CASH OUT THEIR STEAMING PLATEFULS OF WASHED POTATOES, POT ROAST AND PEAS. YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE IN YOUR STARCHED-WHITE WAITERS' COAT AND YOUR HANDS TREMBLE NERVOUSLY, MAKING THE SERVING BOWLS ON THE TRAY YOU CARRY CLATTER TOGETHER IN A STACCATO RHYTHM. YOU'RE AFRAID, AREN'T YOU, WARREN FULLER? YOU'RE AFRAID YOU'RE NOT GOING TO PASS THIS PLEDGE PERIOD SUCCESSFULLY. THAT THEY'RE NOT GOING TO ACCEPT YOU INTO THIS FRATERNITY THAT YOU WANT SO MUCH TO JOIN... AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT.

AND HE SAYS TO ME, "BABY... IF YOU DON'T PASS THIS QUIZ, I'M GOING TO FLUNK YOU FOR THE SEMESTER!"

FLUNK YOU? BUT THAT MEANS YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO PLAY FOOTBALL!

WHAT A FOTTEN TRICK! SPRINGING A QUIZ WITHOUT WARNING!

YOU LISTEN EARILY TO THE CONVERSATION OF THESE UPPER CLASSMEN YOU SO ADMIRE... HANDING ON THEIR EVERY WORD... AND SOMEWHERE, DOWN DEEP, THE SPARK OF AN IDEA SPITTERS.

YOU'LL BE THE FAMED ONE! HE'S DROPPED UP FROM THIS FRAT. IF YOU ASK ME, HE'S GOT IT ON FOR US! HE FLUNKED OUT CHARLIE AND KNOCKED HIM OFF THE BASKET-BALL TEAM!

CRIPPER! WHAT'S A QUARTER-BACK GOTTA KNOW ABOUT MODERN ECONOMICS?

HEY, COULD I LIKE TO SCREAM HIM UP... JUST ONCE... BUT GOOD!



THE FLAME BURNS BRIGHTER. THIS IS YOUR CHANCE, WARREN. YOUR ONE CHANCE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT GETTING INTO THIS FRAT. YOUR OPPORTUNITY TO PROVE YOURSELF TO THE OTHER BROTHERS. SO YOU ANSWER:

I THINK I CAN HAVE PROFESSOR MILLSTONE FIRED! WOULD THAT BE OKAY WITH U?

LOOK, FULLER! YOU DON'T INTERRUPT WHEN WE'RE...

HOLD IT, FULLER! LISTEN TO THE BOY! DID YOU SAY "FIRED"? FULLER?



EVERYONE'S LOOKING AT YOU NOW, WARNER. THEY'RE ALL WATCHING YOU. THIS IS WHAT YOU WANT, ISN'T IT? SO AHEAD! S' EAKUP! TELL THEM ABOUT YOUR IDEA...



"YES! I SAID I *THINK* I CAN HAVE PROFESSOR MILLSTONE *FIRING*! THEN *PHIL* WOULDN'T BE *FLUNGED* AND HE COULD *STILL* PLAY..."

THE MEAL IS FORGOTTEN. THEY'RE OUT OF THEIR CHAIRS... DROPPED... AND YOU... EAGER... BREATHLESS...



"NOW, FULLER? I I HAVE SOME INFO-
MATION ABOUT HIM? IT'S... IT'S WISE TO CHECK IT! BUT THAT'S NO EASY..."

"I I HAVE SOME INFO-
MATION ABOUT HIM? IT'S... IT'S WISE TO CHECK IT! BUT THAT'S NO EASY..."

MAKE YOUR DEAL, WARNER. MAKE YOUR DEAL AND WORRY LATER. YOU'LL THINK OF SOMETHING...



"IF I IF I DO GET HIM FIRED, DO I GET INTO THE PRAT?"

"FULLER? YOU GET THAT *SHIRT* FIRED, AND WE'LL INSTALL YOU THAT SAME NIGHT!"

CAREFUL NOW, WARNER. BETTER NOT LET THEM IN ON THE *PROVE* IDEA. THEY MIGHT NOT *APPROVE*. JUST TELL THEM WHAT THEY *COULD* TO KNOW...



"I HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT PROFESSOR MILLSTONE IS A COMMUNIST!"

"A *RED*? NO! A *PINKO*!"

"NO-NO! WHAT A SLANT THAT WOULD MAKE ON THE CAMPUS?"



"CAN YOU *PROVE* IT, FULLER? THAT'S A PRETTY *HEAVY* STATEMENT TO MAKE ABOUT ANYBODY WITHOUT REMARKABLE TO *PROVE* IT!"

"I THINK I CAN, BUT IT'LL TAKE *TIME*! AND MY *ALBINO* DUTIES..."

"YOU'RE *EXCUSED* FROM *FLUDGE* DUTIES... AS OF NOW, FULLER!"

SO THERE, WARNER! YOU'VE SAID IT. YOU'VE *NAMED* ONE-GUY! NOW, IF YOU CAN *DO* WHAT YOU *SAID* YOU CAN DO, YOU'RE *ON*! YOU WALK BACK INTO THE KITCHEN AND TAKE OFF THAT STARCHED-WHITE-WATER'S JACKET, NOW *GO*! BACK WITH *REPERCUSSION*...



"JEE, OH, JOE! MILLSTONE... A COMMUNIST?"

"IF FULLER CAN GET *PROOF*, WE CAN *SURE* GET *EVEN* WITH HIM..."

"...FOR CHARLIE... AND JACQ... AND YOU, PHIL!"

YOU SLIP INTO YOUR SPORT JACKET AND CROSS BACK THROUGH THE FIRST-HOUSE DINING ROOM TOWARD THE FRONT DOOR.



"ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS START A *MOVIE*... AND... OH, I MIGHT FULLER!"

"GOOD-BYE, FULLER! AND GOOD LUCK!"

"I'LL LET YOU *FEEL*... LET YOU *KNOW* AS SOON AS I'VE GOT SOMETHING *DEFINITELY*..."

YOU WALK DOWN FRATERNITY ROW AND ACROSS THE CAMPUS TOWARD THE GORMS, YOUR HEAD BUBBLING WITH IDEAS, SCHEMES, PLANS. YOU'VE GOT TO DO THIS **RIGHT**, WARREN. IT'S NOW OR NEVER. YOU THINK ABOUT SELMA, YOUR OLDER SISTER YOU THINK ABOUT THAT **LETTER** SHE WROTE YOU...

"I'VE MET SOMEONE, WARREN... SOMEONE WONDERFUL. HE'S ASKED ME TO MARRY HIM. YOU KNOW WHAT THAT WILL MEAN. I HAVEN'T DECIDED YET. I WANT YOU TO THINK ABOUT IT TOM."



SURE, YOU KNOW WHAT THAT WILL MEAN, WARREN. IF SELMA GETS MARRIED, SHE'LL **LOSE** HER JOB. AND THAT MEANS SHE'LL **STOP SENDING YOU MONEY** EVERY MONTH...

IT MEANS I'LL HAVE TO GET A **JOB**. AND MY CHANCES OF GETTING INTO THE PRAT WILL GO OUT THE WINDOW. THEY WON'T WANT ANYBODY WHO HAS TO **WORK** HIS WAY THROUGH COLLEGE.



SO IT'S NOW OR NEVER. IF YOU CAN GET INTO THE PRAT **BEFORE** SELMA GETS MARRIED, EVERYTHING WILL BE **OKAY**...

"DEAR DAD, I'D NEVER STAND IN YOUR WAY, SAY 'YES' TO THE GUY. I'LL MARRAGE. LOVE, WARREN"



THE NEXT DAY, YOU PUT YOUR PLAN INTO OPERATION. YOU GO DOWNTOWN TO ONE OF THOSE MUSTY-SMELLING BOOKSHOPS, AND YOU PERUSE THE SHELVES...



"CAN I HELP YOU, YOUNG MAN?"

"I...I WAS WONDERING IF YOU HAVE ANY BOOKS BY MARX... OR ENGELS... OR LENIN..."

YOU FIND THEM. THE SHOPKEEPER EYES YOU SUSPICIOUSLY, BUT HE WRAPS THEM FOR YOU "GAS CAPITAL"... "THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO"... "THE WORLD REVOLUTION: DANGEROUS BOOKS, INCORPORATING BOOKS. PERFECT FOR YOUR REFORM. BACK AT THE GORM, YOU SEND OFF A SUBSCRIPTION LETTER WITH CASH TO A COMMUNIST PAPER...

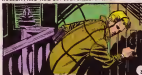


"PLEASE SEND ME A YEAR'S SUBSCRIPTION TO 'THE DAILY WORKING MAN', I ENCLOSE THE AMOUNT NECESSARY. SEND IN PLAIN WRAPPER. JOHN MILLSTONE TEACHERS GORM BUILDING STATE UNIVERSITY"

ON SATURDAY, YOU WAIT AT THE RAILROAD STATION. PROFESSOR MILLSTONE ALWAYS TAKES THE NOON TRAIN ON SATURDAYS. YOU KNOW THAT. BUSINESS IN NEW YORK, YOU GUESS. WELL, YOU'LL CASH IN ON THAT TOO. YOU WATCH HIM BOARD IT.



THE TRAIN PUFFS AND WHISTLES AWAY INTO THE AFTERNOON. THE COAST IS CLEAR. YOU RETURN TO THE CAMPUS... ENTER THE TEACHER'S GORM BUILDING. THE LOBBY IS DESERTED. NO ONE IS AROUND ON WEDNESDAYS. YOU CLIMB THE BACK STAIRS TO THE THIRD FLOOR... WALK DOWN THE HALL TO PROFESSOR MILLSTONE'S ROOMS... AND TAKE OUT YOUR SKELETON KEY...



THE BROTHERS LOOK UP AS YOU STORM INTO THE FRONT HOUSE, THEY LISTEN WIDE-EYED AS YOU HAVE THE SKILL TOH KEY...



"GROW! I GOT THE PROOF!"

"WHAT'S THAT? AREY TO HIS ROOMS?"

"HOLT COM! LET'S GO!"

YOU LEAD THEM TO PROFESSOR MILLSTONE'S ROOMS...THROW OPEN THE DOOR...



"JUST LOOK AROUND! LOOK AT THE BOOKS HE READ!"

"PHIL! DID THIS! 'THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO'!"

YOU SHOW THEM EVERYTHING YOU'VE PLANTED...THE PAMPHLETS...THE BOOKS...THE COPIES OF 'THE DAILY WORKING MAN' YOU'D BOUGHT UNTIL THE SUBSCRIPTION CAN START...



"HE MUST GET THIS MAILED TO HIM! IT'S A COMMIE NEWS-PAPER!"

"WELL, FULLER! LOOK LIKE YOU WERE RIGHT! THESE BOOKS PROVE IT..."

"THEY'RE NOTHING! YOU KNOW WHERE HEDGES EVERY WEEK-END?"

YOU LIE! YOU'RE DESPERATE AND TIME IS SHORT, SO YOU LIE...



"HE GOES TO NEW YORK, MY SISTER SPOKE IN NEW YORK, I HAD HER FOLLOW HIM, HE GOES TO A COMMUNIST CELL MEETING EVERY WEEK!"

"OHAY, BOYS! LET'S GO TO WORK... LET'S FIX THIS COMMIE GOOD!"

AND SO IT BEGINS. THE BUNDLES. THE WHISPERING CAMPAIGN. IT SPREADS LIKE WILDFIRE OVER THE CAMPUS. FROM FRAT HOUSE TO FRAT HOUSE... SORORITY TO SORORITY...



"DID YOU HEAR? MILL-STONE'S A RED!"

"THAT'S RIGHT! THEY SAY HE'S A COMMIE AGENT SPYING ON THE LAB WORK WE'RE DOING HERE..."

...BUILDING AS IT GOES...ENHANCED BY PERSONAL TOUCHES...THE IMAGINATIONS OF THE GULLIBLE... THE SHADOWS OF THE GOSSIPS...



"THEY FOUND COMMUNIST LITERATURE IN HIS ROOMS... AND A PARTY CARD!"

"HE TRIED TO ORGANIZE A CELL... HERE, AT STATE!"

IT BECOMES AN EXPLODING FIRE... RAGING OUT OF CONTROL... READY TO CONSUME ANYTHING IN ITS PATH... EVEN THE INNOCENT...



"I CAN'T BELIEVE IT OF JOHN! I JUST CAN'T..."

"PERHAPS THIS WILL CONVINCCE YOU, DEAN CANNY. THIS WAS IN HIS MAIL THIS MORNING. I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF REMOVING IT. IT'S A PLAIN WRAPPED COPY OF 'THE DAILY WORKING MAN'! HE SUBSCRIBES!"

AND THE LETTER THAT CAME IN YOUR MAIL THIS MORNING, WARREN. IT DOESN'T *STONER* YOU, DOES IT? YOU *KNEW* IT WAS INEVITABLE. BUT IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME NOW TILL THAT *INSTALLATION CERE-MONY*...



"DEAR WARREN,
SURPRISE, DARLING. I MARRIED THE GUY BETTER START HUNTING UP A JOB. I'VE GIVEN MY WEEK'S NOTICE. AND I'VE GOT ANOTHER SURPRISE FOR YOU, BUT IT CAN WAIT TILL THINGS ARE ALL WORKED OUT. BE SEEING YOU,
LOVE,
DEBBIE"

LUCKY BOY. FINALLY LANDED A FELLOW. YOU TOSSED THE LETTER ASIDE. YOU'VE GOT OTHER THINGS TO THINK ABOUT. LIKE THAT MEETING THE DEANS CALLED WITH YOUR PRAT FOR THIS AFTERNOON...



"BEFORE WE MAKE ANY CHANGES, THESE ROOMS DEVELOPED, WE'D LIKE TO BE SURE, TELL US EXACTLY WHAT YOU *DID* FIND LAST WEEK-END IN PROFESSOR WILLSTONE'S ROOMS? COMMUNISM?"



"I THINK WE'D BETTER SEND FOR PROFESSOR WILLSTONE. HE DESERVE AN EXPLANATION."
"HE PROBABLY WON'T BE IN HIS ROOMS. IT'S SATURDAY. HE'S BEEN GOING TO NEW YORK ON THE WEEK-ENDS!"
"AND WE KNOW ABOUT THAT TOO, DEAR GARY? TELL MOM, FULLER?"



"GO AHEAD, WARREN. TELL THE DEAN. TELL HIM THE WILD STORY YOU MADE UP... ABOUT YOUR BROTHER."
"FOLLOWED HIM, YOU SAY? COMMUNIST CELL MEETING? WELL, WE'D LIKE YOUR SISTER TO TESTIFY TO THAT..."
"NOT PLEASE? DON'T DEAR RELI INTO THIS! SHE JUST GOT MARRIED. SHE COULDN'T COME. ONE..."

IT'S MONDAY MORNING... A LITTLE OVER TWO WEEKS AFTER YOU FIRST PLANTED THOSE INFLAMMATORY BOOKS IN PROFESSOR WILLSTONE'S ROOMS. THE FIRE BULLET IS RAGING... ABOUT TO EXPLODE...



"WILLSTONE, I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU... IN MY OFFICE IMMEDIATELY."
"OF COURSE, DEAR GARY."

YOU STAND WITH YOUR FUTURE FRATERNITY BROTHERS AND YOU WATCH THE INNOCENT LAMB BEING LED TO THE SLAUGHTER.



"AS A MATTER OF FACT, DEAR GARY, I INTENDED TO SEE YOU TODAY. THERE'S SOMETHING I WANTED TO DISCUSS."
"OH? IS THAT SO?"

AND AS THE DOOR TO THE DEAN'S OFFICE CLOSSES, YOU TURN TO THE STREETS AND SMILE...



"LOOKS LIKE PAUL PLAYS FOOTBALL, DA FELLOW?"
"LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE GONNA BE A FOOTBALL FRATERNITY MAN, FULLER?"

YOU CAN HEAR THE ANGRY VOICES COMING FROM THE DEAN'S LOCKED DOOR... THE LULL WHEN THE PHONE DIAL WHEEL BEGINS TO CRACKLE...



YOU HEAR THE PHONE RECEIVER BEING HUNG UP AGAIN... THE ANGRY VOICES RESUME... THE WALL CLOCK'S HANDS CRACK ANOTHER... THEN...



IT'S SELMA... STANDING THERE... HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS...



YOU STAND... STUNNED... AS SELMA GOES INTO THE DEAN'S OFFICE. THE WHOLE THING'S ABOUT TO BLOW UP IN YOUR FACE, WARREN. SHE'LL TELL DEAN CANNY HE NEVER FOLLOWED WALLSTONE. SHE'LL DENY EVERYTHING DO SOMETHING... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...



THAT'S IT, WARREN. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE? A SISTER? YOU LOST HER ANYWAY WHEN SHE GOT MARRIED. DON'T LET HER QUEER EVERYTHING FOR YOU NOW...



THE DOOR IS OPEN. THE PLAT'S OUT THERE. THEY'RE LISTENING, WARREN. DO A GOOD JOB!



CAN YOU EVER FORGET THE LAZERS, WARREN? IN YOUR DREAMS...YOUR NIGHTMARES TO COME...WILL YOU EVER STOP BEING THE SHOCK?... THE HUNT...THE UTTER DEFEAT ETCHED IN THEIR FACES?...



WILL YOU EVER FORGET THE CHILL THAT RAN DOWN YOUR SPINE AS THEY WALKED FROM THE OFFICE, OUT ACROSS THE CAMPUS...HELPLESS...SPATERS...



AND CAN YOU EVER FORGET THE EXPRESSIONS ON THE FACES OF YOUR FUTURE FRATERNITY BROTHERS WHEN YOU TURNED TO THEM...THE LOOKS IN THEIR EYES...



WILL YOU EVER FORGET THE WAY YOU LAUGHED, HELLO...?



WILL YOU EVER FORGET, WARREN?



A KIND of JUSTICE

SHE TRIED NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT, BUT THE PAIN AND THE SHOCK OF WHAT HAD JUST HAPPENED FILLED HER MIND. SINCE MORE SHE SAW HERSELF WAITING AT THE BUS STOP, UNEASY BECAUSE DARK HAD GIVEN WAY TO A BLACK MOONLESS NIGHT, SHE'D BEEN WAITING, ALONE... AND THE NEXT MOMENT SHE'D NOT BEEN ALONE. HE'D APPEARED OUT OF THE DARKNESS AND SHE'D SEEN THE LOOK ON HIS FACE. HE'D FORCED HER TO THE OLD SHACK BY THE QUARRY. SHE'D PLEADED AND SCREAMED, AND NOW IT WAS OVER. BUT IT WOULD NEVER BE OVER FOR HER... BECAUSE SHE'D NEVER FORGET...



THE MAN TURNED FROM THE DOORWAY TO THE SHACK AND SHUFFLED INTO THE NIGHT. SHE HEARD HIM STUMBLE AND CRASH AND GO ON. SHE GOT TO HER FEET AND RETCHED AND WAS SICK ON THE FLOOR BEFORE SHE STAGGERED OUT, CRYING AND SOBING...



SHE FOUND HER WAY BACK TO THE ROAD, BUT SHE DIDN'T WAIT FOR THE BUS THIS TIME. SHE WAS TOO AFRAINED FOR PEOPLE TO SEE HER WHEN SHE HEARD IT COMING. SHE STOPPED BEHIND A TREE TILL IT WENT BY.



SHIRLEY COULD NOT ANSWER HER MOTHER'S QUESTIONS WITH WORDS. BUT HELEN HANSEN SAW HER DAUGHTER'S EYES, FILLED WITH RED AND ACCENTED BENEATH WITH DEEP BLACK CIRCLES. SHE SAW SHIRLEY'S HAIR, WILD AND TANGLED. SHE SAW SHIRLEY'S BODY TWITCH WITH EACH ANGUISHED SOB. SHIRLEY COULD NOT SPEAK, BUT TO HER MOTHER, THERE WAS NO NEED.

"WHY DIDN'T RUTHIE'S FATHER URGE YOU HOME? YOU MUCH PREFERENCE TO STAY HIS FAT MULE WITH A SOFT CHIMP? WELL, THAT'S THE LAST TIME YOU EVER VISIT THAT GIRL."



JOHN HEARD THE DOOR TO SHIRLEY'S ROOM SLAM SHUT. HE SCRATCHED HIS HEAD. NO, JOHN DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.

"HE TWISTED MY WRISTS TILL I HAD TO FALL DOWN. SOB. AND THEN HE... ON, MOTHER. MOTHER, DON'T MAKE ME TELL YOU ANY MORE!"



OVER AND OVER IT KEPT COMING BACK IN HER MIND... THE WAITING IN THE DARKNESS... THE MAN... THE SHACK. AND AGAIN AND AGAIN SHE HEARD HIS WARNING. SHE RAN, SOB-BING, THROUGH THE NIGHT. SHE WANTED TO BE HOME WHERE THERE WAS WARMTH AND LOVE. SHE ARRIVED... BREATHELESS... HESITATED AT THE DOOR...



WHEN SHE WENT INTO THE LIVING ROOM, JOHN HANSEN HURLED HIS NEWSPAPER ASIDE ANGRILY.

"TEN O'CLOCK? ONLY SIXTEEN YEARS OLD. WHAT'S WROUGHT WHAT'S THE MATTER?"



HELEN TOOK HER DAUGHTER'S SHAKING HAND AND LED HER UP THE STAIRS. JOHN HANSEN STOOD UNPLEASSED.

"NOW SEE HERE! I THINK I DESERVE SOME SORT OF AN EXPLANATION FROM HER, HELEN, MUST YOU ALWAYS INTERFERE..."



SHIRLEY SAW HIM AGAIN, STANDING IN THE DOORWAY TO THE SHACK. SHE HEARD HIS BRISTLY WARNING...

"TELL ANYBODY... AND I'LL KILL YOU!" "I... I CAN'T TELL YOU... SOB! I CAN'T!" "JOHN! COME UP HERE QUICKLY!"



JOHN HEARD THE NOTE OF **ANGER** IN HIS WIFE'S VOICE, AND AS HE CLIMBED THE STAIRS HE SAW THE SLIMT OF **ANNE** IN HER EYES. HE THOUGHT THE HATE WAS FOR **JOHN** AND FOLLOWED HER **SECRETLY** INTO SHIRLEY'S BEDROOM. BUT WHEN SHE TOLD HIM OF THE TERRIBLE THING THAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIS DAUGHTER, HE BECAME THE **JAGGED LION... THE OUTRAGED FATHER.**



"SHE'LL TELL ME WHO IT WAS, BY GOD! I'LL MAKE HER TELL ME!"

"LEAVE HER ALONE, JOHN!"

JOHN SHOUTED AND BULLEDIED SHIRLEY, BUT SHE WOULD NOT GIVE HIM THE INFORMATION HE SOUGHT. CRYING SOFTLY, SHE COMEBED IN HER MOTHER'S EMBRACE...



"WHY WON'T YOU TELL WHO ARE YOU TRYING TO PROTECT? I'LL FIND OUT IF I HAVE TO BEAT IT OUT OF YOU!"

"STOP IT! STOP IT! CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S AFRAID TO TELL?"

JOHN HANSEN COULD BORR THE CLEAK OF AUTHORITY WHICH SUFFICIENTLY AROUSED. HE STORMED DOWNSTAIRS, PULLING SHIRLEY AFTER HIM...



"SHE'LL TELL SHERIFF JAGGSON, BY GOD! I'LL DRAG IT OUT OF HER! AND WHEN I GET MY HANDS ON THE FILTHY DOG THAT DID IT, I'LL TEAR HIS FLESH FROM HIS BONY BODY!"

"NO! PLEASE DON'T MAKE ME BOAST TO YOU!"

"EVERYONE IN TOWN WILL KNOW, JOHN! DON'T YOU THINK SHE'S GONE THROUGH ENOUGH ALREADY?"

JOHN WAS DEAF TO THEIR PLEAS, AND TEN MINUTES LATER, WITH HIS FURY AT ITS PEAK, HE FORCED HIS DAUGHTER TO RELIVE HER EXPERIENCE FOR SHERIFF PAUL JAGGSON AND HIS DEPUTY, RUSSELL FORD...



"WHO BOLD IT, SHIRLEY? TELL US WHO IT WAS?"

"I... I CAN'T! FOR I CAN'T!"

SHERIFF JAGGSON TOOK SHIRLEY'S HAND AND DROVE WARMLY TO HER. SHE LOOKED AT THE FLOOR AND THE TEARS FILLED HER EYES...



"WAS IT SOMEONE YOU KNOW, DEARY? OR WAS IT A STRANGER? A VAGRANT...?"

"NO... NO..."

THE DEPUTY CURSED...



"THIS JUNT BERTIN US NOWHERE. THE KIDS BEGAIN TO TELL. I SAY WE GO OUT AND BOUND UP SUSPECTS. I SAY WE BRING 'EM IN AND GIVE 'EM A SOUND OVER!"

"WE'LL GO ALONG! SHIRLEY WON'T BE AFRAID TO POINT HIM OUT WITH THE LAW ALONG!"

"YOU'D BETTER LET US HANDLE THIS, HANSEN! TAKE THE GIRL HOME!"

THE SHERIFF AND HIS DEPUTY WANDERED THROUGH THE TOWN'S DESERTED STREETS. AT AN ALL-NIGHT DINER, THEY SPOTTED THE STRANGER. HE SAT AT THE END OF THE COUNTER, STARRING... JUST STARRING...



"I SEE HIM! LET'S GO HAVE A TALK WITH HIM!"

THE YOUNG STRANGER SAT TENSE AS HE AND THE TWO LAWYERS MOVED TOWARD HIM SLOWLY. JACOB STOPPED ON ONE SIDE OF HIM... FORD, THE OTHER.



HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN IN TOWN, MISTER?

HUH? COUPLE OF MONTHS, I THINK?

YOU AIN'T BEEN IN *NEVE* THAT LONG? WHAT'D YOU GO TELL YOU GOT TO THIS PLACE?



WHY... I SIGHT MOST OF THE TIME LOOKIN' FOR A PLACE TO STAY. FIGURE ON GETTIN' A JOB HERE, *NOH?* WHAT'S *RYONS?*

MOET ANY *DOLES*, STRANGER? YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?

WHAT'S YOUR *NAME*, SON? WHERE YOU *FROM?*



MY NAME'S *EDDIE NICHOLS*. I'M FROM *DETROIT*. NO *BLASON*. WHAT'S THE IDEA OF ALL THE *QUESTIONS?* I DON'T KNOW ANY *SOLES* HERE! I'VE JUST BEEN IN *TOWN* A COUPLE OF *HOURS*!

MAYBE YOU'D BETTER COME ALONG WITH *USE* SON. IF YOU TELL US THE *RYONS*, YOU WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO *NOVITY* ABOUT!

EDDIE NICHOLS WENT ALONG EARLY ENOUGH, BUT HE WAS FRIGHTENED... REALLY FRIGHTENED. HE WAS A STRANGER IN TOWN AND HE FELT COLD UNFRIENDLY EYES UPON HIM.



IF THIS IS A *PINCH*, *DRAFT*! I'VE GOT *NOTHING* TO HIDE. BUT I'VE GOT A *RIGHT* TO *KNOW* WHAT THE *CHARGE* IS!

YOU DON'T NEED US TO *DRIVE* YOU NO *PICTURES*, *NICHOLS*! WE ASKED IF YOU MET A *GIRL* TONIGHT... A *YOUNG* GIRL? YOU FIGURE IT OUT!

EDDIE NICHOLS GLANCED AROUND AND SAW HOSTILITY IN THE EYES OF THE OTHER CUSTOMERS. HE HURRIED OUT OF THE DINER WITH DEPUTY FORD, HERE ALLARD, THE COUNTERMAN, LEANED OVER AND CALLED DEPUTY JACOB'S *ARM*.



SOME OF US GUYS GOT *DAUGHTERS*, HAH! IF THAT SAYS *NO* ANYTHING TO ONE OF THEM, WE OUGHT TONIGHT WHO IT *WAS*!

WE'RE JUST TAKING *NICHOLS* IN FOR *QUESTIONS*, HERE! THAT DOESN'T MEAN HE'S *GUilty*. I HAVE NO *RIGHT* TO TELL YOU WAS THE *GIRL* IS. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW *MORE*, ASK *JOHN HANSEN*!

THE SHERIFF LEFT, HERE TURNED...



***SHUTLEY HANSEN*! THE *DIRTY* RAT GOT THE *HANSEN* *GIRL*!**

SHE'S A *POB* FIFTEEN OR SIXTEEN. SOMEBODY OUGHT TO CALL *JOHN*!

I'D LIKE *FIVE* *NOVITY* ALONE WITH THAT *GUY*! I'D TEACH HIM...

OUTSIDE THE DINER, EDDIE NICHOLS HEARD THE ANGRY WHISPERING AND WAS SUDDENLY STRIPPED WITH PANIC. HE TRIED TO MAKE A BREAK FOR IT, BUT THE LAWYERS WERE FAST...



YOU'RE NOT BEING *SMART*, SON!

AN *INNOCENT* MAN DON'T TRY TO *LAW* OUT, *NICHOLS*!

SHERIFF PAUL JUDSON WAS CALM AND EFFICIENT WITH HIS QUESTIONING. NOT AT ALL LIKE HIS SCOWLING CLUSTERING DEPUTY. FOR TWO SOLID HOURS THEY MILLED EDDIE NICHOLS, BUT HE DIDN'T BREAK DOWN.



IF YOU'VE BEEN IN TROUBLE BEFORE, WE'LL FIND OUT, NICHOLS!

GO AHEAD! FIND OUT! I'VE GOT NOTHING TO HIDE!

YOU'RE A PRETTY SNOOTY ASS, NICHOLS!

RUSS FORD PLACED THE CIGARETTE FROM THE SUSPECT'S LIP, TEARING AWAY A THIN FILM OF FLESH WITH IT.

YOU'D BETTER START SAYING SOME STRAIGHT ANSWERS, NICHOLS. WE GOT OTHER WAYS OF GETTING THE TRUTH!

WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO? LET YOU HAVE A STINKING POUND UP ON ME? I'VE LEVELLED WITH YOU! YOU'VE GOT NOTHING ON ME! YOU'VE NO RIGHT TO HOLD ME!



SUDDENLY, THE SHERIFF WAVED HIS HAND FOR QUIET AND COOKED HIS EARS, LISTENING. THEN HE GESTURED TO THE DOOR AT THE BACK OF THE OFFICE...



LISTEN! HEAR THAT! THERE'S A MAN COMING HERE, TAKE NICHOLS BACK THERE AND LOCK HIM UP! WORK HIM FOR RADIANCE!

WELL, LET HIM GO, SHERIFF! HE SAYS HE'S INNOCENT!

NO, YOU'VE GOT TO LOCK ME UP! YOU'VE GOT TO PROTECT ME! YOU'VE GOT TO TELL THEM I'M THE WRONG MAN!



I DON'T HAVE TO TELL THEM ANYTHING, SON JUST TAKE IT EASY. NOBODY'S GOING TO HUNT YOU!

SHERIFF JUDSON STOOD ON THE JAIL-HOUSE STEPS, LOOKING OVER THE ANGRY MOB...



YOU'VE GOT NO CALL COMING HERE LIKE THIS. THERE'VE LADS IN THIS STATE TO TAKE CARE OF THE GUILTY. AND THAT'S NOT SAYING THE SUSPECT IS GUILTY!

BUT HE IS A SUSPECT, JUDSON! DO YOU THINK HE'S ONE OF THEM?

SHERIFF JUDSON LOOKED AT JOHN HANSEN AND AT THE HATE FROZEN ON HIS PALLID FACE...



AS YOUR FRIEND, JOHN... WELL, MAYBE I DO! BUT AS A SHERIFF, I HAVE NO RIGHT TO THINK ANYTHING! I'VE GOT TO BE SURE! I'VE GOT TO HAVE PROOF! ABSOLUTE EVIDENCE. ON A CONFESSION! NOW, YOU MEN GO HOME AND LEAVE NICHOLS TO ME AND RUSS...

ALL RIGHT, SHERIFF! WE'LL GO. BUT WE'LL BE BACK!

ALL THE NEXT DAY, MEN CAME TO THE HANSEN HOME AND KEPT JOHN KEYED UP. THE MEN LOOKED DIFFERENTLY AT SHERLEY AND SHE FELT WHAT THEY WERE THINKING, AND SHE HATED THEM, AND HER FATHER, TOO. THAT NIGHT JOHN MADE HER ODDS TO GO OUT...



WHY DOES SHE HAVE TO GO DOWN THERE AND PARADE HER SHAME?

I'VE CALLED JUDSON A DOZEN TIMES! HE'S GETTING AHEAD WITH THAT BUM. SHERLEY'S GONNA SETTLE THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL!

SON... SON...

THE MOB WAS ROARING FOR BLOOD NOW, SOMEONE OUTSIDE POUNDED ON THE JAILHOUSE DOOR AND TELLED FOR THE SHERIFF TO BRING NICHOLS OUT. SHERIFF JUDSON SPOKE MORE QUICKLY...URGENTLY. HE PRESSED THE SHEET OF PAPER AND A PEN INTO THE SUBJECT'S HANDS.

OH, GOD? I WAS BEGINNING TO THINK THAT AT LEAST YOU RELIEVED ME!

LISTEN TO ME, EDDIE! SIGN THIS CONFESSION AND YOU'VE GOT A SAFE PASSPORT INTO THE COUNTY JAIL. I'LL BRING YOU OUT THE BACK WAY! MY GAF'S OUT THERE, YOU CAN TELL THE COURT YOU SIGNED IT UNDER DURESS. I'LL BACK YOU UP, EDDIE! I SWEAR I'LL BACK YOU UP!



A MINUTE LATER, SHERIFF JUDSON WAS HEADED FOR THE FRONT DOOR WITH THE SIGNED CONFESSION. HE SHOWED IT TO HIS DEPUTY, RUSSELL FORD, ON THE WAY. THEY GRINNED AND WINKED AT EACH OTHER.

IT ALWAYS WORKS, DON'T IT, SHERIFF? NEXT TIME, YOU BE THE VILLAIN... AND I'LL BE THE SHERIFF'S FRIEND!

NOW EVERYTHING IS NICE AND LEGAL, RUSSEL!



THE MOB OUTSIDE WAS A SCREAMING BELLOWING MASS OF ANGRY HUMANITY WHEN SHERIFF JUDSON FACED THEM AGAIN. AS HE HELD UP HIS HAND FOR SILENCE, A RESTLESS HUSH SETTLED OVER THE WILD-EYED MEN WITH THEIR CLAWS AND FISTS AND LENGTHS OF PIPE. JOHN HANSEN REPEATED AT THE LUNAR.

WE'VE HAD ENOUGH STALLING, JUDSON! LET MY SHWILEY SEE NICHOLS, SHE'LL TELL US IF HE'S THE ONE!

THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY, JUDSON! LOOK HERE! EDDIE NICHOLS HAS SIGNED A FULL CONFESSION!



SHERIFF JUDSON'S WORDS WERE LIKE A GREEN LIGHT SIGNAL TO THE MOB. THE WILD, UNREASONING MOB, UNASHAMED OF ITS HATE-FILLED PASSION, THE SCREAMING MEN SURGED FORWARD IN A BLOOD-FRENZY, CARRYING BEFORE IT AN HYSTERICAL TESTIFIED MAN.

NO! NO! I DON'T WANT TO GO! DON'T MAKE ME GO IN THERE!

LET GO OF ME, SHERIFF! WE'VE GOT A DOG TO SETTLE WITH NICHOLS...MY DAUGHTER AND I...



THE MOB FURIED THROUGH THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE LIKE A STORM-BOSSSED WAVE.

HANSEN, YOU'RE A LUNATIC! WHAT YOU'RE DOING IS JUST ENOUGH WITHOUT MAKING THE BAD MATCH! O'MOM, SHWILEY! I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.

GRAY! GRAY! HEY! LET ME GET FIRST CRACK...



THE REVENGE-HUNGRY RIGHTISTS MEN PUSHED FOOT DEPUTY RUSS FORD WHILE HE STOOD FLATFOOTED AGAINST A WALL, WITH A WILD, THRILL-FILLED LOOK ON HIS FACE...



"DO GET HIM! GIVE 'IM ONE FOR ME! OH, HOW I WISH I COULD BE IN THERE WITH YOU..."

BUT SHERIFF JUDSON COULDN'T HEAR EDDIE BROWNS' SCREAMS AS THE LUNATIC WAS CRUSHED INTO HIS CELL. HE COULDN'T HEAR JOHN JENSEN SHOUTING LEO'S NAME. HEARD THE SOUND OF DRUMMING, CHEERING BOATS.



SHERIFF JUDSON COULDN'T HEAR THE SILENCE CLOSE IN AS EDDIE'S LAST SIGN CHOKED OFF IN A LIQUID GURGLE AND SOMEBODY WHISPERED...



"HE'S DEAD!"

EDDIE BROWNS' TERRIFIED SCREAMS COULD BE HEARD ABOVE THE CLAMOR OF THE SHALLOOING DRUMS...



"SHERIFF! THE DOOR! YOU DIDN'T LOCK THE DOOR! HELP ME, SHERIFF! YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T LET THEM GET ME! HELP!"

YAAAAA...

HE COULDN'T HEAR THE PUMMELING FISTS, THE HEAVY BOOTS, THE LAUGHTER AND HOWLS OF DELIGHT COMING FROM THE JAILHOUSE WHERE AN INDIGNANT FATHER AND HIS FORTY-SOME PEOPLE WERE BEATING AND PUNCHING AND KICKING THE LIFE OUT OF AN INNOCENT MAN...



HE COULD ONLY HEAR THE FRIGHTENED FAMILIAR BOMBING OF THE BOYS, BESIDE HIM IN THE CAR PARKED IN THE DARKNESS MILES FROM THE SCENE. HE COULD ONLY HEAR THE SILENCE AFTER SHERIFF JUDSON HAD RUN HIS AGAIN... AS HE'D DONE... IN THE SHACK...



"YOU WERE SMART NOT TO TALK BROWLEY! REMEMBER! YOU TELL ANYBODY... AND I'LL KILL YOU!"

"I WON'T TELL! I PROMISE! PLEASE, SHERIFF! PLEASE... DON'T..."

The PEN IS NIGHTTIER

A MOODY SUN SMILED DOWN ON THE TERRIBLE CITY STREET, ILLUMINATING THE DRABNESS AND UNLIVED, REVEALING, WITH ITS GOLDEN GLOW, THE GRAY BOOT-STAINED TENEMENT BUILDINGS. IT BURNED DOWN ON THE YOUNG WHO TRIED TO FORGET THEIR GROWING HALF-EMPTY BELLYS BY PLAYING IN THE HORSE-FOULED, TRASH-LITTERED GUTTER. IT CAST WARM RAYS THAT DID NOT WARM THE BLACK HOPELESS EMPTY HEARTS OF THE OLD. THE FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD WITH SAD BROWN UNCRYING EYES WATCHED THE BLACK HORSE-DRAWN HEARSE LURCH AWAY. SOON THE SAME MOODY SUN WOULD SHINE ON AN UNMARKED PARENT'S GRAVE... THE GRAVE OF THE FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD'S FATHER. NOW ZACK HAMLIN, THE SAD-EYED BOY, WAS ALONE IN THAT DRAB WELTER OF HUMAN MISERY... ALONE IN HIS FETTERING SLUM...

ZACK HAMLIN WAS ALONE IN THE LONELY WORLD OF POVERTY AND HUNGER. HE'D BEEN BORN TO IT... HE'D GROWN UP IN IT... AND HE'D HATED IT, DEEP INSIDE HIM, HIS RESENTMENT SMOLDERED... A SCATHING HATRED OF THE WRETCHED... THE HUMAN ORDS... THE NAMED BRUTALITY ALL AROUND HIM...



SO YOUR OLD MAN *SCOWLED* HIMSELF TO DEATH, *ADD*, SNOT NOBODY WELL, THERE'S A BUMPT! NOBODY'S GOTTA BOTHER *BURRIN*? THEY'LL JUST *POOF* HIM INTO A HOLE...

LIVING ON THE LITTER-STRAWN SIDEWALK, ZACK HAMLIN'S MATE FOUND A THING TO CENTER ITSELF UPON... A BULLY... A TORMENTOR. AND TEARS CAME TO HIS EYES AT LAST... NOT FOR HIS LATE UNLAMENTED FATHER, BUT FOR HIMSELF...



HEY, THAT'S A GOOD ONE, EDDIE! GET UP AND FIGHT!
 SO...? SO...? A GOOD ONE, EDDIE! GET UP AND FIGHT!
 "POOF" HIM INTO A HOLE! HAH, HAH...



BLEATEN AND KICKED... GORDED BY AN INSTINCTIVE CURNING... JOINED WITH SPIKE AND MALICE... ZACK HURRIED TO A NEARBY NEIGHBORHOOD... TO ANOTHER BULLY... AND WITH MORE WORDS, HE FITTED BRUTALITY AGAINST BRUTALITY...

WHAPPP! SOMEBODY SAID THAT ABOUT MY SISTER! WHO? TELL ME WHO! I'LL KILL 'EM! TELL ME WHO IT WAS OR I'LL TRUST YOUR ARM OUT OF ITS SOCKET!

IT... IT WAS ~~EDDIE~~ ~~SOME MAN~~! ~~OWWWW!~~ D-DON'T TELL HIM I SAID THAT! PLEASE...



THEN, HE WATCHED THE VICIOUS BLOODY BATTLE OF THE BRUTES... A BANG FIGHT WITH KNIVES AND BROKEN BOTTLES AND BARE FISTS... BROUGHT ABOUT BY WORDS... ONLY WORDS...



ZACK WATCHED THE POLICE COME FINALLY AND HEARD THE TOWN BATTERED BRUTES INTO A PATROL WAGON. HE SAW EDDIE, HIS LIFE DRIVING AWAY, BUSHING RED FROM A DOZEN JAGGED WOUNDS, CARRIED TO A HASTILY SUMMONED AMBULANCE. AND ZACK HAMILIN SMILED. EDDIE, HIS TORMENTOR, WAS DYING. ZACK HAMILIN HAD LEARNED THE POWER OF WORDS...



ZACK TURNED HIS BACK ON THE SLIMS THAT DARK HE LEFT FOREVER. BUT HE CARRIED SOME OF ITS HUNGER AND LONELINESS WITH HIM. HE SEDDED AND SCORCHED FOR FOOD, AND WHEN ALL ELSE FAILED, HE STOLE... AND WAS CAUGHT...



O'WON, KID! I'LL BUY YOU A MEAL, YOU LOOK LIKE YOU HAVEN'T EATEN IN A WEEK!

I... I HAVEN'T.



SO ZACK FOUND A FRIEND... A REPORTER NAMED JOHNNY HARRIS... WHO PRO HIM AND TOOK HIM HOME AND GOT HIM A JOB AS A COPY-BOY WITH HIS PAPER...

GOOD BOY, ZACK! KEEP MOVING! THAT'S THE WAY! HERE... TAKE THIS INTO REWRITE!

YES, MR. HARRIS.



AND ZACK KEPT MOVING. HE WAS FULL OF GRIME OUTWARDLY, HE OVERFLOWED WITH GRATITUDE FOR HIS BENEFACTOR. BUT INTERNALLY, HE DESPISED HIM AND WATCHED HIM WITH HUNGRY EYES AND THE INSTINCT OF A JACKAL.



ZACK WATCHED AND WAITED AND PLANNED. IT WAS THREE YEARS TILL HIS CHANCE CAME. HIS FRIEND, HIS BENEFACTOR, JOHNNY HARRIS, CAME BACK FROM AN EXTENDED LUNCH HOUR THAT DAY, ROARING BLOOD...

GOTTA GEDA STORY OUT, KID! ALMOST DEADLINE! IM THERE'N BUTHIN' I WRITE ABOUT!

SIT DOWN, JOHNNY! FUFF!



JOHNNY HARRIS, SUFFERING FROM HIS OCCASIONAL DRIBBLE, NEVER TOUCHED HIS TYPEWRITER. HE SLUMPED DOWN INTO THE CHAIR AND SLIPPED INTO OBLIVION, AND ZACK TOOK OVER....



ZACK HAMLIN WROTE THE STORY. AND WHEN IT REACHED THE CITY EDITOR'S DESK, ZACK WAS CALLED IN...

HARRIS DON'T WRITE THAT! YOU DID. WHERE IS HARRIS? ANSWER ME!

HE'S IN HIS OFFICE. HE... HE ISN'T FEELING GOOD! I DON'T WANT HIM TO GET INTO PROBABLE...



NOT FEELIN' GOOD, END WELL, YOU CAN KEEP ON WRITING FOR HIM, HAMLIN. I'VE WARNED HIM. I TOLD HIM ONE OF THESE DAYS HE'D DRINK HIMSELF OUT OF A JOB! HE'S FARTHER, HAMLIN... YOU'RE TAKING HIS PLACE...



THE SUBTLE, THE CRUEL, THE SAVAGE STRENGTH OF WORDS. THEY WERE ZACK'S WEAPON... HIS POWER. BUT MORE YEARS PASSED BEFORE HE KNEW WHAT POWER HE HAD. THERE WAS SOMETHING THEN CALLED PROHIBITION, AND THERE WERE MEN CALLED BOOT-LEGGERS WHO FOUGHT DEADLY WARS OVER WHO SOLD ALCOHOL TO WHOM, AND WITH UNCRANNY INSTINCT, THE REPORTER, ZACK HAMLIN, WOULD BE THERE TO SEE...



THE KILLERS HAD FLED... ALL BUT ONE... A YOUNG FUNK NAMED VAUGHN... MARNY VAUGHN, HE AND ZACK FROCE EACH OTHER IN THAT BODE-SPLAT-TERED WAREHOUSE. THE GUNMAN LEVELLED AN AUTOMATIC AT ZACK'S CHEST...

YOU SAW A LOT, HAMLIN? YOU SAW TOO MUCH!



WIDE UP, WARD! THE COPS WERE TIPPED! THEY'RE RIGHT BEHIND ME! HAND OVER THAT GUN! QUICK!

TEN SECONDS AFTER ZACK HAD FOXGOTTED VAUGHN'S GUN, THE POLICE WERE SWARMING INTO THE WAREHOUSE...

WHAT CTA BOON VAUGHN WASN'T IN ON THIS MASSACRE, HAMLIN? HE'S DUTCHS FINGER, AND DUTCH HAD IT IN FOR THIS MOP!



WHAT'D VAUGHN GOIN' IN WITH, DEL AMET... HIS FINGER? YOU FANNED HIM! YOU DON'T FIND A GUN? MARNY WAS WITH ME! HE WAS BEYOND ME UPTOWN, WE HEARD SHOOTING, THAT'S HOW IT WAS. I'D SWEAR TO IT IN COURT!

THE POLICE LEFT... WITHOUT THEIR KILLER. ZACK
HAD TURNED THEM AWAY WITH WORDS... JUST WORDS.

I DON'T FORGET
FAVOURS, HANSEN.
BUT, WHY? WHY
STICK YOUR NECK
OUT FOR ME?

I DON'T KNOW, MANNY. MAYBE
I WANTED TO SEE IF I COULD
GET AWAY WITH IT. MAYBE I DID
IT BECAUSE WE'RE BOTH AFTER
THE SAME THINGS... MONEY AND
POWER? WE JUST HAVE DIFFER-
ENT WAYS OF GOING ABOUT IT...

ZACK HAD PICKED HIMSELF A VALUABLE FRIEND IN
MANNY VAUGHN, POP OF THE MIDDLE TWENTIES, THE
MUGGLEMAN HAD POUNDED HIS WAY TO THE TOP OF THE
SCOTTISH REAP. MANNY MADE MILLIONS. AND ZACK...
WELL, ZACK STILL HAD HIS WORDS...

WELL, NOW YOU
LIKE THE SET
UP, ZACK?

WELL, MANNY? BUT WHAT ABOUT
THE LANDLORD? THIS IS A PRETTY
FINEY MESSY BUSINESS FOR A
BREAKFAST?

I GOT FANCY CUSTOMERS, KID.
THEY DON'T LIKE DRINKING IN NO
RAT HOLE, SO THEY COME HERE.
ANYHOW, I OWN THE WHOLE
BUILDING? UH-HO, ZACK? I GOT
A COUPLE OF BILLS...

THAT'S WHERE ZACK MET KITTY
DIXON. KITTY WAS FOUR YEARS
OLDER THAN ZACK... A FLASHY
BLONDE... REAL PRETTY...

WE'RE A GOOD PAIR, ZACK AND ME.
I GOT THE DOUGH... ZACK'S GOT
THE POWER. EVERY BUSINESS IN
TOWN BUYS AROUND HIM. ZACK'S
NOT POWER, ONLY HE DON'T
KNOW IT!

ZACK'S GOT WORDS. AND HE'S GOT
THE BARK EXAMINED TO PUT 'EM
IN. THAT'S POWER. HE'S GOT THE
LORDSHIP ON EVERY MAN AND
POLITICIAN IN THE STATE. THEY
EAT OUT OF HIS HAND. ZACK CAN
MAKE OR BREAK
A DOZEN GUYS
LIKE ME WITH A
FEW WORDS!

NOT YOU, MANNY!
NOT MY BEST
FRIEND!

THAT'S WHAT I HAD ENGRAVED ON THIS
CIGARETTE CASE. "TO ZACK, MY BEST
FRIEND." IT'S PLATINUM, ZACK, COST
ME FIVE 'O'S! AND YOU KNOW WHAT
THIS SET INSIDE? THERE'S AN
APARTMENT FOR YOU IN THIS BUILD-
ING... FURNISHED? WHIT'LL YOU
SEE IT!

MANNY, I
DON'T WANT
ANYTHING
FROM YOU.

IT'S A SWEET-LOOKING
JOINT, ZACK. AND
KITTY HERE, GOES
WITH IT!

OH, WELL.
THAT'S DIS-
FERENTING
GENTLEMAN
COULD REFUSE.

WELL, I HOPE
YOU'RE NOT
TOO MUCH
OF A
GENTLEMAN.
ZACK, MANNY.

MIRNY BELIEVES WAS WRONG, THEN, JACK HAMLIN **KNEW** HE HAD POWER IN HIS GRASP. BUT JACK WAS **SIDING** HIS TIME. HE FOUND HIS CHANCE SIX MONTHS LATER...

I TALKED TO **ONE GUY** AND THE **WHOLE PAPER** DOES **WANTS**. YOU KNOW THE **LINED LADS**, HAMLIN, YOU KNOW **BETTER** THAN TO WRITE THIS **JUNK** ABOUT **HOWARD GARDSON** BEING THE **MONEY-MAN** BEHIND THE **BOOTLEES** **SHIRT**? HE'S 'FAKE **ADVISE**', HAMLIN! HE'LL **SUE** US **RIGHT** OUT OF **BUSINESS**.

GARDSON?
HOWARD GARDSON?
OH I
SAY THAT
ABOUT
HIM?

IN **ONE** LINE YOU SAY "WHAT **FAKE** **ADVISE** **PLAYBOY** IS **PUTTING** UP THE **LOOT** FOR A **SHAKY** **BOOTLES** **EMPIRE**" AND AFTER A **COUPLE** OF **DOGS**, YOU SAY "ILLUSTRATE **HOWARD GARDSON** IS **PUTTING** HIS **DOGS** INTO **LIQUID** **ASSETS** FOR A **SHAKY** **TUNDRANT**"

SO WHAT?
'LIQUID **ASSETS'**
DOESN'T **MEAN**
LIQUID? **NOT**
ON **WALL**
STREET? **WE'RE**
DEAF, **ARMED**,
IT'S **TRUE** **EVERY**
WORD. I'M **TRYING**
TO **DO** **SOME** **GOOD**
IN **THIS** **WORLD!**



GOOD? YOU CALL A LOT OF **SHITTY** **SHITTY** ABOUT **CREAT** **STORIES** AND THEN **MARRIED** **BOFFYFRIENDS** **GOOD**? YOU **BETTER** GO FIND SOME **HELLON** **FACE** TO PUT THIS **FRASH** INTO **HAMLIN**!

OKAY,
MR. HALL! I
DON'T **REPLY**
ON THE **DAILY**
EXAMINER, WHEN
BOFFYFRIENDS **GOOD**? YOU **WANT** ME
BACK, YOU'LL
PAY **MY** **ARREAR**?

THE NEXT MORNING, THE **DAILY EXAMINER** WAS A **HELL-OUT** AND EVERYONE **KNEW** WHY, INCLUDING ITS **PUBLISHER** WHO **MARRIED** **MR. HALL** **CRAWL**...

ALL **RIGHT**, **HAMLIN**! **HAVE** YOUR **PRICES** **WHAT?** **TWO** **HUNDRED** **AND** **FIFTY** **A** **WEEK**? **LISTEN**, I **DON'T** **GET** **THAT** **MUCH** **WIT**... **DON'T** **HANG** **UP** **OKAY?** **DEAR**, **TWO-FIFTY**? **HUH?** **DEAR**... **ANYTHING** **YOU**...
SAY...



SO **JACK** **HAMLIN** **CAME** **BACK** **TO** **THE** **EXAMINER**, AND HE **WAS** A **POWER** **MAN**...

SAY, **JACK**?
ON **THIS**
MARRIOTT
BUSINESS,
IT'S **PRETTY**
ROUGH? I
THINK **WE**...

NEVER **WIND** **WHAT?**
YOU **THINK**, **MR. HALL**,
WHAT I **WROTE**
ABOUT **MARRIOTT**
IS **TRUE**. YOU **SEE**
THIS **TELEGRAM**?
IT'S **FROM** **A** **NEWS-
PAPER** **SYNDICATE**.
THEY **WANT** **TO** **HANDLE**
MY **COLUMN**.



POWER? **YES**, **JACK** **HAMLIN** **HAD** **POWER**. HE **WAS** **POWER**. HE **EXERCISED** **POWER**. HE **WAS** **A** **FORCE** **FOR** **GOOD**. HE **OWN** **KIND** **OF** **GOOD**. **THIS** **MAN** **WAS** **GOOD**... WITH A **SMALL** **W**...

NOT **ONLY** **HERE**, **BUT** **ALL** **OVER** **THE** **COUNTRY**. **THEY** **KNEW** **HE**. **THEY** **WANT** **ME** **TO** **POINT** **OUT** **THE** **TIMBERS**... **THE** **CROOKS**, I'VE **NOT** **BEEN** **ON** **THE** **STREET**!

YOU'VE **NOT** **WIND** **ON** **THE** **RUN**, **HAMLIN**? **NOT** **THE** **CHIEFS** **WHO** **LICK** **YOUR** **BOOTS**. **NOT** **A** **LAWSYCKER** **LIKE** **MR. HALL**? **NO!** **HE** **GET** **YOU** **THAT** **SYNDICATE** **OFFER**. **SO** **HE'S** **A** **GREAT** **GUY!**



THAT NIGHT, **JACK** **WENT** **TO** **SEE** **MIRNY**...

SURE, **JACK**? I **WAS** **MEANING** **THAT** **OFFER**. I **HAD** **TO** **GO** **INTO** **THE** **SYNDICATE** **TO** **WORK** **IT**. **BUT** **WHAT** **IS** **GOOD** **FOR**? I **GET** **FIFTY** **IN** **YOU**, **JACK**?

YOU **MEANT** **WELL**, **MIRNY**. **BUT** I **WANTED** **TO** **MAKE** **IT** **ON** **MY** **OWN**!



SO YOU **PUSHED** THINGS, SO WHAT? I GOT THE **ONE** THING I **NEED**, THANKS TO YOU, MANNY! A **STAND- GATED COLUMN** WILL BRING IN **MONEY** BY THE **BUSHELFUL**. **MONEY** AND **POWER**!

MONEY IS POWER, JACK! **YOU'LL SEE!** I'VE MADE **FOUR** I'LL MAKE **OTHERS!** I'LL MAKE **SENATORS** AND **GOVERNORS**. I'LL **BUY** THIS COUNTRY, JACK, AND I'LL **RUN IT MY WAY!**



ZACK HAMLIN WAS READ THROUGH- OUT THE COUNTRY AND THE MONEY ROLLED IN... HIS MONEY. MANNY VAUGHN'S AMBITIONS ALWAYS INCLUDED RICHEST FRIEND. ONE DAY THEY WENT TO THE FEDERAL BROADCASTING SYSTEM'S OFFICES.

I'LL **SEE** TO IT **ZACK** GETS THE **SPONSORS**, **BROOKSTER...** SO YOU GOT **NOTHING** TO **WORRY** ABOUT! **RIGHT?**



NOTHING EXCEPT LOSER JUNK, BUT IF YOU SAY SO, MANNY, I'LL WASTE HIM THE AIR TIME...

ZACK HIT THE AIR WITH HIS WORDS, AND WITH THEM HE POCDED THE NATION. DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE OUT THE TIMORONS AND CROSS. AN UNBROUGHTLY ACQUIRED MAN LEAPED TO HIS DEATH, BUT EVEN A 'GOD' CAN MAKE ONE MISTAKE...

...THE CALIFORNIA, INITIALS L.O., REPEAT, INITIALS L.O., IS GETTING STRONG LACKING IN HIS BID FOR THE GOVERNORSHIP. GET THIS, MR. AND MRS. CALIFORNIA, I'VE CHECKED THIS MAN'S SOURCE OF INCOME. YOU SHOULD KNOW WHERE HIS MONEY COMES FROM BEFORE YOU GO TO THE POLLS. LOCAL PAPERS, PLEASE NOTE!



ANOTHER EXPOSE... ANOTHER RUINED LIFE. BUT ZACK HAMLIN HAD SAVED THE VOTERS OF CALIFORNIA.

IT WENT **ALL NIGHT** TONIGHT, **OH, MANNY!** YOUR **SHOPS** IS PRACTICALLY **IN** OUT THERE! **I...I...**

THIS IS **WEEZ**, JACK! I FEEN **SAYIN'** HER IS A **SURPRISE**. **WEEZ** AND WE ARE GETTING **MARRIED!**



WELL! NOW YOU'VE GOT EVERYTHING, MANNY! SHE'S VERY LOVELY!

WEEZ, THANK YOU, MR. HAMLIN!

LOOK, JACK! I'M BUYIN' A BIG PLACE OUT ON THE ISLAND. WEEZ AND ME WANT YOU TO COME OUT THERE AN LIVE WITH US. IT'D BE LOST WITHOUT YOU, JACK...



THINGS HAPPENED THAT YEAR. IT WAS 1939 AND ZACK HAMLIN WAS WIFED OUT IN THE GRASS. SO HE WENT OUT TO LIVE WITH THE VAUGHNS. ZACK WAS BROKE. BUT HE STILL HAD HIS POWER, AND NEW MONEY KEPT ROLLING IN.

A **TOAST** TO THE MAN WHO **MADE** ME WHAT I **AM** TODAY!

YOU MAKE ME **BLISS**, ZACK! AFTER ALL, THAT'S WHAT FRIENDS ARE FOR.



IT HAPPENED IN 1937. IT WAS NIGHT. WEEZ VAUGHN, MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN EVER, HAD GONE TO BED. THE DOOR TO MANNY'S ROOM OPENED. MANNY TURNED. SAW THE SLAM, A SPECIAL ENGRAVED GUN. A LUGER. A SHOT RANG OUT.



MANNY NEVER MADE A SOUND AS HE WENT DOWN WITH THE BLOOD SPURTING FROM THE HOLE IN HIS CHEST...



ZACK WAS SHOCKED AT HIS FRIEND'S COLD-BLOODED MURDER. HIS PLACE KNEW NO BOUNDS. ZACK USED HIS POWER TO AVENGE HIS FRIEND'S DEATH.

I WANT *EVERY BIT* OF THAT SOB... IN MY COLUMN THE WAY I *DICTATED* IT, YOU HEAR? I'LL *RUN* THE MURDERING RAT INTO THE *GROUND*. AND I'M GOING TO DEVOTE MY WHOLE *BROADCAST* TO MANNY, TONIGHT!



DRIVE, DRIVE, DRIVE! ZACK DROVE WITH ALL THE POWER OF HIS COLUMN AND HIS BROADCASTS. HE DROVE THE POLICE, AND WHEN THEY FAILED TO FIND A SUSPECT, ZACK HAMLIN FOUND ONE...

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS MAN... *NESDO WALLACE*, ONCE WAS A MEMBER OF A BOOTLESS GANG THAT WAS *MASSACRED* DURING *PROHIBITION DAYS*. HE BLAMED *MANNY VAUGHN*, A GOOD CLEAN-LIVING AMERICAN, FOR HIS MEN'S DEATH. *THERE'S YOUR MOTIVE? REVENGE!*



NESDO WALLACE WAS ARRESTED AND PUT ON TRIAL. HE HAD ALIBI WITNESSES, BUT ZACK HAMLIN HOUNDED THEM UNTIL, ONE BY ONE, THEY DROPPED AWAY. THEN ZACK HOUNDED THE COURT JURY...



HE FIND THE DEFENDANT... *GUILTY* IS *CRIMINAL!*

MY GOD! SOMEBODY BELIEVE ME! I'M *CLEAR!* I *SWEAR!* IT!

THE NIGHT AFTER THEY BLINDED NESDO WALLACE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR, ZACK HAMLIN WENT ALONE TO PAY HIS RESPECTS TO INEZ VAUGHN, THE SCREAMED WIDOW. SHE AND ZACK WENT TO THE CELLAR TOGETHER...



FORGET MANNY GONE WE TWO FOR MY BIRTHDAY LAST YEAR, INEZ!

PLEASE, ZACK! THROW IT IN THE FIRE! GET RID OF IT!

ZACK CHUCKLED AS HE WEIGHED THE GEM IN HIS BRIDES HAND. IT WAS A FINE GEM... A SPECIAL, HANDSOMELY ENGRAVED LIEBER...



THERE'S *HOPE* FOR YOU! OH, NOW I'D LOVE TO WRITE *THIS* STORY! BUT I *NEVER* WILL!

THROW IT INTO THE *FIRE*, ZACK!

ZACK TURNED AND TOSSED THE RING WITH WHICH HE'D BLINDED MANNY VAUGHN INTO THE FURNACE. THEN HE TOOK INEZ INTO HIS ARMS IN A PASSIONATE EMBRACE...



OH, ZACK! ZACK! I *THOUGHT* I'D HAVE TO WAIT *FOREVER!*

I'D HAVE KILLED A *HUNDRED* MANNY VAUGHNS FOR YOU, INEZ!

AND SO IT IS WITH 'GODS'. THEY STAND ABOVE US MORTALS AND THEY PULL THE STRINGS. THEY CAN *DO NO WRONG!*

IMPACT



NO. 17
NOV.

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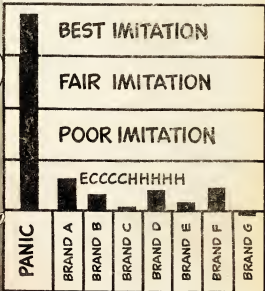
SUSPENSTORIES

JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
 **TRADITION!**



PROOF... OF 8 BRANDS TESTED, PANIC IS BEST IMITATION OF MAD

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4-SIDED TRIANGLE

IT WAS AUTUMN'S FIRST NIGHT, TOO EARLY FOR EVEN A TRACE OF FROST ON THE RIPENING PUMPKINS THAT GLOWED IN THE FIELDS LIKE ORANGE LANTERNS BENEATH THE PALE MOON. A FAINT BRIZE STIRRED, WAFTING A WARM SCENT OF NEW-MOWN HAY INTO THE FARMHOUSE KITCHEN WHERE THE HIRED GIRL BUSIED HERSELF WITH THE SUPPER DISHES AND THE FARMER SAT, TAKING HIS EASE AT THE WOODEN TABLE, SUCKING LAZILY AT HIS CORNCOB PIPE. IT WAS ON THAT VERY NIGHT THAT ABNER YATES FIRST NOTICED THINGS ABOUT ANNIE. POOR, PRETTY ANNIE. HALF-WITTED ANNIE. HOW SUDDENLY SHE HAD BLOSSOMED. PEACH-LIKE, FULL-RIPENED, LIKE FRUIT CRYING TO BE PICKED AND ENJOYED. THIS ABNER NOTICED AND IT WHETTED A LONG-DENIED APPETITE WITHIN HIM...

ANNIE, COME HERE, GIRL...

HUH? MISS HESTER... SHE SAYS, "ANNIE, YOU GET THE DISHES DONE!" SO I GOTTA GET THE DISHES DONE, MIST' ABNER...



IT TOOK HOLD OF ABNER THEN... A MADDENING DEEP-FELT COMPULSION. HE ROSE SLOWLY, CAME UP BEHIND ANNIE, AND PRESSED HUNGRY LIPS AGAINST HER NECK... HIS HARSH, BRISTLED CHIN NUZZLING THE SOFT FLESH OF HER WHITE SHOULDER... HIS HARD, CALLOUSED HANDS CARESSING...

GASP... MIST' ABNER! WHAT'RE YUH DOIN'? DON'T, MIST' ABNER! PLEASE...

ANNIE...



WITH THE STRENGTH BORN OF YEARS OF HARD WORK, ANNIS LOOSENED HIS GRIP AND SLIPPED FROM HIS GRASP. SHE TURNED, HER PUZZLED BLUE EYES WONDERING AT HIS SCOWLING FACE. ABNER BREATHEO HARD BUT SPOKE SOFTLY, TRYING TO MAKE HER UNDERSTAND... TRYING TO PENETRATE HER HALF-WITTED MIND...

ABNER GRINNED, TRYING TO HIDE HIS CONCERN...

OH, NOW Y'AIN'T GOIN' T' TELL HESTER, ANNIE. I'M JUST TRYIN' T'BE FRIENDLY!

I GOT A FRIEND, MIST' ABNER. AN' HE DON'T DO THET!

WHAT YOU MEAN, YOU GOT A FRIEND? YOU DON'T NEVER LEAVE THIS FARM! THE CLOSEST FOLKS'RE FOUR MILES OFF AND THEY GOT NO YOUNG MEN THERE...

I GOT A FRIEND, MIST' ABNER... AN' HE DON'T DO THET! I WANT HE SHOULD... BUT HE DON'T!

I LIKE YOU, ANNIE! 'TAIN'T NO HARM IN BEIN' A MITE FRIENDLY! I BEEN GOOD T'YOU ALL THESE YEARS, AIN'T I?

WHY'D YUH DO THET, MIST' ABNER? MIS' HESTER WOULDN'T LIKE YOU T'DO THET!



HESTER YATES, OLD BEFORE HER TIME AND UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND OR ACCOMMODATE HER HUSBAND'S NEEDS ANY LONGER, MOVED UP THE WELL-WORN PATH TO THE KITCHEN DOOR...

YOU TWO STILL IN TH' KITCHEN? WHAT'RE YOU TALKIN' 'BOUT, ANNIE?

'BOUT NUTHIN', HESTER! JUS' TALK! I...



THEN, HE'S A FOOL, ANNIE! HE... IT'S HIM I WANT, MIST' ABNER! NOT YOU! I KIN WAIT...



I DIDN'T ASK YOU, ABNER! I ASKED ANNIE! WHAT WERE YOU AN' MIST' ABNER TALKIN' 'BOUT, ANNIE?

I TOL' HIM I DON'T WANT HIM GETTIN' FRIENDLY 'CAUSE I ALREADY GOT A FRIEND, MIS' HESTER!



WHAT YOU MEAN, ANNIE... GETTIN' FRIENDLY? WHAT'D MIST' ABNER DO?

TARNATION, HESTER! Y'KNOW ANNIE'S GOT A FEEBLE MIND. SHE'S JUS' BRAGGIN' 'BOUT SOME BOYFRIEND SHE THINKS SHE'S GOT...

I DO GOT HIM... I DO!





THIS
BOYFRIEND
OF YOURN,
ANNIE?
WHAT'S HIS
NAME?

NO! I
WON'T
TELL!
IF I
TELL,
HE'LL GO
AWAY!

Y'SEE, HESTER?"
SHE'S GOT NO
BOYFRIEND, JUS'
CRAZY DREAMS
IN THAT FOOL
HEAD OF HERS!



I'M... I'M GLAD
FOR YOU, ANNIE!
I'M GLAD YOU
GOT A BOYFRIEND!

THANK
YUH, MIS'
HESTER!

HMMPH!



SHE TURNED TO HER HUS-
BAND...

IT'S LATE,
ABNER! G'MON
T' BED!

GOOD
IDEA,
HES'!

LATER, WHILE HESTER SNORED RHYTHMICALLY AND DEEPLY, ABNER LAY BESIDE HER, HIS BODY TAUT AND ANXIOUS, HIS MIND DISTURBED AND RESTLESS. HE THOUGHT OF ANNIE IN HER ROOM. ANNIE... ANNIE. HER NAME SCREAMED IN HIS MIND. HE WENT TO HER IN HIS MIND AND WAS WITH HER IN HIS MIND...



AND SUDDENLY ABNER COULD STAND IT NO LONGER!

HESTER SLEPT SOUNDLY, NOT KNOWING... NOT HEARING... NOT HEARING HER MAN RISE FROM THEIR BED AND MOVE STEALTHILY THROUGH THE HALL TO THEIR HALF-WITTED SERVANT'S ROOM. SHE DID NOT HEAR HER HUSBAND'S TREMBLING HANDS FIND THE DOORKNOB IN THE DARK... TWIST IT... SWING THE DOOR WIDE...



ANNIE...

THE WARM AUTUMN NIGHT BREEZE COMING IN THE OPEN WINDOW BLEW ACROSS ANNIE'S BED, CARRYING THE EXCITING SCENT OF HER RIPE YOUNG BODY TO ABNER. BUT ABNER'S SENSES HAD DECEIVED HIM, FOR ANNIE WAS NOT IN THE BED...



WHAT THE...

A MOVEMENT OUTSIDE IN THE MOONLIT FARMYARD CAUGHT ABNER'S EYE. ANNIE WAS OUT THERE, CUTTING ACROSS TO THE FIELDS BEYOND, CLAD ONLY IN HER FLIMSY FLANNEL NIGHTGOWN...



SHE'S GOIN' T'HIM! HER BOYFRIEND!
THEN IT IS TRUE!

ABNER SEETHED WITH FRUSTRATION AND JEALOUSY. HE CREEPT BACK THROUGH THE HALL, PAST HESTER'S INNOCENT SNORING, AND INTO THE LIVING ROOM. HE REMOVED THE LOADED SHOTGUN FROM ABOVE THE MANTLE...



... AND WENT OUT INTO THE NIGHT. FAINT IDIOTIC LAUGHTER DRIFTED TO HIM ON THE WIND. HE FOLLOWED THE SOUND OF HER GUTTERAL VOICE WHISPERING IN THE MOONLIGHT. AND THEN HE CAME UPON THE GIRL AND HER LOVER, AND HIS ANGER TURNED TO TRIUMPHANT GLEE...



ANNIE STOOD BEFORE HER LOVER, TEMPTING HIM WITH HER SWAYING BODY, PLEADING WITH HIM, MOANING WITH PASSION. BUT ANNIE'S LOVER DID NOT RESPOND. ANNIE'S LOVER WAS A **RAGGED LIFELESS GOLD SCARECROW**...



ABNER DRANK IN ANNIE'S HEATED AGITATION WHILE HIS OWN CRAVING MOUNTED TO A FEVER PITCH. HE TORE HER FROM HER INHUMAN LOVER AND CRUSHED HIS LIPS TO HERS. HIS BODY TO HERS.



ANNIE WRENCHED HERSELF FROM ABNER'S STARVING ARMS, HER ARDOR QUICKLY COOLED...



HE CAN HELP ME! HE WILL! SOMEDAY! SOMEDAY...

Y' LITTLE IDIOT! HE AIN'T A FLESH AN' BLOOD MAN LIKE ME! LE' ME HELP YOU, ANNIE? LE' ME...



SHE COVERED AGAINST HER STRAW LOVER, SOBBING...

LE' ME BE, MIST' ABNER! LE' ME BE OR I'LL TELL MIST' HESTER!

NO! DON'T TELL HER, ANNIE! IT'D JUS MAKE TROUBLE. SHE... SHE'D SEND YOU AWAY FROM HERE! I DON'T WANT THAT...



Frustrated, yet fearful of Hester's wrath, Abner reluctantly returned to the farmhouse...

THAT YOU, ABNER?
WHERE Y'BEEN?

I... I HEARD A CRITTER OUT-
SIDE WORRYIN' THE STOCK.
I GOT ME M'GUN BUT I DIDN'T
SEE NUTHIN'!



Hester looked out to see Annie coming in across the farmyard...

THERE'S YER CRITTER,
ABNER. ANNIE... COMIN' BACK
FROM MEETIN' UP WITH HER
FELLER!

DRAST THAT
HALF-WIT GIRL...
DISTURBIN' M'
REST!



Yes, Annie *DID* disturb Abner's rest. Even after Hester had fallen back to sleep, he lay awake for hours, tortured with unsatiated yearning, resenting the agonized passion Annie wasted on the unfeeling scarecrow that could never claim her...

I... I GOT TO HAVE HER!
I GOT TO!



But sleep came at last... and restless dreaming... then morning and the days work began. Abner went about doing his chores, stopping often to scowl at his insensate rival...

STUPID FOOL... WAITIN' FOR A
SCARECROW...



Whenever Annie was near, Abner drank her in with his eyes. He feasted on every minute curve of her shapely body... the rippling rhythm when she walked...

SUCH A BLASTED
WASTE...



Sometimes their eyes would meet and he'd look into hers with urgency... and see in them only simple-minded indifference...

T'AIN'T NO USE! SHE'S
TOO STUPID TO UNDER-
STAND!



But Abner was not the *ONLY* one who studied Annie that day. Hester, too, followed the girl's movements about the farm... and Hester, too, was concerned...

...TOO STUPID TO
UNDERSTAND!



BY BEDTIME THAT NIGHT, ABNER'S NEED HAD BECOME UNBEARABLE. HE SAT ON HIS SIDE OF THE BED, UNDOING... AND THE SAGGING CAUSED BY HESTER'S SHAPELESS BULK, THE UNFEMININE RING OF HER VOICE, ALL SERVED TO IRRITATE HIM...

HOPE THERE'LL BE NO CRITTER DISTURBIN' YOUR REST T'NIGHT, ABNER.

AW, GO T'SLEEP, HESTER. I'LL DO THE WORRYIN' OVER THE LIVE-STOCK!



WHEN HESTER'S HEAVY BREATHING TOLD ABNER THAT SHE WAS ASLEEP, HE GOT OUT OF BED...



...AND TIP-TOED DOWN THE HALL TO ANNIE'S DOOR. HE HESITATED, LISTENING. HE COULD HEAR HER IN THERE, RESTLESS... TORMENTED... LIKE HIMSELF...

MAYBE SHE'LL SCREAM IF I GO IN. SCREAM AN' WAKE HESTER...



SUDDENLY, A PLAN FORMED IN ABNER'S TORTURED MIND... A MADDENING PLAN. HE SLIPPED BACK DOWN THE HALL AND OUT OF THE HOUSE...

FROM THE SOUND OF HER, SHE'LL BE COMIN' OUT TO HER LOVER SOON...



SO ABNER HID HIMSELF AND WAITED, AND BEFORE LONG, HE SAW ANNIE COME FROM THE FARMHOUSE... HER FLANNEL NIGHT-GOWN FLOWING BACK AS SHE RAN IN WILD HASTE, REVEALING HER YOUNG BODY... THE MOONLIGHT GLISTENING ON HER GOLDEN HAIR...



ANNIE THREW HERSELF UPON THE SCARECROW... THE COLD, UNYIELDING LOVER... WITH COMPLETE ABANDON SHE PLEADED, PANTING, DELIRIOUS IN HER GUEST...



HOW LONG WOULD THIS UNWILLING CREATURE DEPRIVE HER? HOW LONG THIS CRUEL NEGLECT? HOW LONG? THE ANSWER CAME SUDDENLY... STARTLINGLY... SHOCKINGLY, NO LONGER! NOW! NOW!



HESTER WAS STARTLED OUT OF HER SLEEP BY NOTHING MORE, PERHAPS, THAN HER OWN STENTORIAN SNORES, OR WAS IT ANNIE'S DELIGHTED CRY THAT DRIFTED THROUGH THE NIGHT AIR? SHE WAS AWAKE, MISSING HER HUSBAND, CALLING HIM...

ABNER? ABNER!



A WILD CRAZY THOUGHT FLASHED THROUGH HESTER'S BRAIN. SHE HURRIED TO ANNIE'S ROOM, FEARING THE WORST...

WHAT A FOOL I'VE BEEN!



FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR...

SHE'S GONE!
THEY'RE BOTH GONE!
THEY'VE RUN OFF TOGETHER!



OUT IN THE FIELDS, ANNIE CLASPED HER ARMS AROUND THE SCARECROW'S NECK. THIS WAS HER LOVER! HOW TRUE HER LOVER! HOW GOOD HER LOVER! THE STRAW MAN... THE STICK AND RAG MAN... WAS *HERS* AT LAST...



THE SOFT ZEPHYR THAT SWAYED THE GRASSES CARRIED IMPASSIONED SOUNDS TO HESTER'S EARS. SO THEY WERE *NOT* GONE *AFTER ALL*! THEY WERE *THERE*... OUT THERE IN THE FIELDS...

SO THAT'S IT! ABNER! HE'S ANNIE'S BOYFRIEND! HE'S THE ONE SHE'S BEEN MEETING!



HESTER SNATCHED UP THE PITCHFORK THAT LEANED AGAINST THE CLAPBOARD SIDING OF THE FARMHOUSE AS SHE CAME OUT OF THE DOOR...

WELL, I'LL TEACH 'EM...
BOTH OF 'EM!



ANNIE'S TEMPLES THROBBED, AND BODYLESS VOICES SCREAMED IN HER EARS. IT WAS ALL MADNESS NOW AS THIS STRAW- AND- CLOTH LOVER CARRIED HER HIGH... LIFTED HER TO THE RISING MOON. AND THEN, SHE LAY AT HIS FEET SMILING UP AT HIM, WHILE ALL ABOUT, THE TALL GRASSES SWAYED IN THE SOFT, WARM, SPENT BREEZE...



HESTER FOUND ANNE WITH HER ARMS AROUND THE SCARECROW'S KNEES, KISSING ITS THREADBARE TROUSERS AND WHISPERING OVER AND OVER AGAIN...



I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!
I LOVE YOU!

CHOKO...
ANNIE...

HESTER FELT SUDDENLY SICK! SHE HAD THOUGHT FOUL THINGS OF HER HUSBAND... THOUGHT FOUL THINGS OF THIS POOR HALF-WITTED SIMPLE GIRL...



OH, MIS' HESTER!
IT'S YOU!

ANNIE! WHAT
...WHAT ARE
YOU DOIN',
CHILD?

ANNIE'S EYES WERE FILLED WITH STARLIGHT. SHE GAZED AT THE STIFF, MOTIONLESS SCARECROW...



I TOL' YOU 'BOUT
HIM, MIS' HESTER! I
TOL' YOU I HAD A
BOYFRIEND!

ANNIE!
YOU POOR
DEAR! THIS
IS A SCARE-
CROW! IT'S
NOTHIN' BUT
STICKS AND
STRAW!

ANNIE TURNED... ANGRY... HER EYES FILLING WITH TEARS.



NO! NO! HE LOVES
ME! HE SHOWED ME
T'NIGHT! HE SHOWED
ME...

NO, ANNIE! HE COULDN'T!
LOOK! I'LL SHOW YOU!
HE'S STRAW! STRAW!

HESTER DROVE THE PITCHFORK DEEP INTO THE SCARECROW'S CHEST... ITS MIDDLE... ITS LEGS... AGAIN AND AGAIN! ANNIE SHRIEKED...



NO! NO! YOU'LL
KILL HIM!

HE NEVER
WAS ALIVE,
ANNIE! HE'S
STRAW! SEE? SEE?

HESTER STOPPED LANCING THE SCARECROW AND STARED IN HORROR AT THE SCARLET LIQUID THAT OZZED FROM EACH JAGGED RENT SHE'D TORN IN ITS CLOTHES WITH THE PITCHFORK. ANNIE SOBBED...



YOU SAID HE WASN'T
ALIVE! YOU SAID...

MY GOD! HE'S
BLEEDING!
HE'S...

...AND THEN, THE TWO WOMEN SCREAMED AS ABERNATHY'S TOPPLED OUT OF THE SCARECROW... DEAD...



CHOKO...

GOOD LORD!

THE END

IN CHARACTER

THE TINKLING OF DAZZLING SILVERWARE AND FINE CRYSTAL GLASSES AND EXPENSIVE CHINA WERE THE ONLY SOUNDS HEARD IN THE LAVISHLY DECORATED EXECUTIVE DINING ROOM OF MAGNUS PICTURES, INC. POMPOUS, OVERDRESSED, OVERFED MEN, LONG USED TO THE INDULGENCES AND LUXURIES OF WEALTH AND SUCCESS, STOPPED THEIR BRAGGING PRATTLE ABOUT SWIMMING POOLS AND CADILLAC CARS AND ULCER DIETS AND TURNED INDIFFERENT EYES TO THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR. LAWRENCE B. MAYNOR, PRESIDENT OF MAGNUS PICTURES, STOOD STIFFLY, CLEARING HIS THROAT, AND SMILING DOWN AT THE MILD-MANNERED, SELF-CONSCIOUS, AGING MAN SEATED AT HIS RIGHT. HE HELD UP THE SIMPLE GOLD WATCH. THERE WAS A SCATTERING OF HALF-HEARTED APPLAUSE. HE BEGAN TO READ THE MESSAGE ENGRAVED IN THE GOLD METAL BACK...

"TO BELA KARDIFF, IN MEMORY OF A FABULOUS ERA, FROM THE EXECUTIVE STAFF OF MAGNUS PICTURES, INC. JUNE 4, 1954..."



BELA KARDIFF ROSE SLOWLY TO ACCEPT THIS TOKEN OF APPRECIATION TENDED HIM AT THIS TESTIMONIAL DINNER, HIS SAD EYES DIMMED WITH TEARS. HE TOOK THE GLITTERING WATCH IN HIS SENSUOUS HANDS AND READ AND REREAD THE INSCRIPTION. THEN HE LOOKED AT THE MEN SEATED AROUND THE SMALL HORSESHOE-SHAPED TABLE. HIS VOICE WAS BARELY AUDIBLE AS HE BEGAN TO SPEAK...



I... I WANT TO *THANK* YOU ALL FOR *HONORING* ME HERE TONIGHT... FOR THIS *DINNER*... THIS *WATCH*... FOR MY *WHOLE* CAREER...

HE PLACED THE WATCH ON THE TABLE AND HESITATED, AS IF CONTEMPLATING HIS NEXT WORDS. THEN HE PICKED UP THE LARGE BOTTLE OF CHAMPAGNE BEFORE HIM...



I WOULD LIKE TO PROPOSE A *TOAST*... A TOAST THAT SAYS *THANK YOU* FOR ALL THAT YOU HAVE *DONE* FOR ME...

THE CHAMPAGNE CORK POPPED LOUDLY AS BELA YANKED IT FROM THE BOTTLE NECK. HE TURNED AND BEGAN TO WALK BEHIND THE MEN SEATED AT THE TABLE...

PERHAPS *CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER* WOULD BE THE *BEST* WAY TO MAKE THIS TOAST... SO I'LL START WITH THE *FIRST* OF YOU THAT I EVER KNEW...



THE TALL, MILD-MANNERED MAN STOPPED AND SLOWLY POURED A GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE...

TO DON MULLER... MY AGENT... WHO *DISCOVERED* ME AND FIRST STARTED ME DOWN THE ROAD TO *FORTUNE AND SUCCESS*...



DON MULLER SMILED SELF-CONSCIOUSLY AS BELA KAROFF LOOKED DOWN AT HIM...

REMEMBER, DON? REMEMBER THE *LEAN DAYS* BEFORE I BECAME A STAR. REMEMBER HOW I USED TO COME TO YOUR *OFFICE* EACH DAY... *BEGGING... BEGGING FOR WORK*...



"AND YOU WOULD SHAKE YOUR HEAD..."

SORRY, BELA! NOTHING FOR YOU! I'M TRYING... *HONEST*... BUT NOBODY WANTS AN *ENGLISH-PROFESSOR*-TYPE THESE DAYS. THEY'RE LOOKING FOR *GANGSTER-TYPES*... OR DASHING *HERO-TYPES*... *MUSCLE MEN*.

A BUTLER ROLE... AN *ELEVATOR OPERATOR*... A *WAITER*... ANYTHING. I... I'M *FLAT BROKE*, DON...



REMEMBER THE MORNING THAT CALL FROM MAGNUS CAME IN... HOW YOU LISTENED AND NODDED AND LOOKED AT ME ALL THE WHILE?

TALL, EH? AN *UNKNOWN*? OH... A *MAKE-UP* PART. SURE. YEAH, LARRY. A *WHAT*? WELL, I... I... *WAIT*, LARRY! LISTEN, I GOT JUST THE GUY YOU'RE LOOKIN' FOR! I'LL SEND 'M DOWN!



REMEMBER HOW YOU HUNG UP AND TURNED TO ME...

LOOK, BELA! I GOT A PART FOR YOU! IT'S A *BIG PART*! *GOOD MONEY*! A *CHANCE*! IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'D WANT, BUT IT COULD BE A *BEGINNING*!

I'LL TAKE IT, DON! I'LL TAKE ANYTHING!



MAGNUS PICTURES IS TAKING A FLYER ON A *NEW GIMMICK*... *HORROR MOVIES*! THEY'RE GOING TO DO A *HOLLYWOOD VERSION* OF "*FRANKENSTEIN*"! THEY'RE LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY TO PLAY THE *MONSTER*!

A... A *MONSTER*! BUT I... I...

REMEMBER HOW YOU DELIVERED YOUR ULTIMATUM, DON?...

LOOK, BELA. YOU OWE ME A *NICE HUNK OF DOUGH*! EITHER YOU *TAKE* THIS PART, OR I *DROP YOU COLD*!



BELA RETURNED TO THE SPEAKER'S CHAIR... TO LAWRENCE B. MAYNOR, PRESIDENT OF MAGNUS PICTURES. HE FILLED HIS CHAMPAGNE GLASS SLOWLY...



REMEMBER THAT, LARRY? YOU WERE JUST A CASTING DIRECTOR THEN. YOU WERE ONLY PART-WAY UP THE LADDER TO THE TOP!

'REMEMBER HOW I CAME TO YOU?...' DON MULLER SENT ME OVER! I... I'VE COME TO AUDITION FOR THE 'MONSTER' ROLE. WHAT SHALL I READ?...



READ! THERE IS NOTHING TO READ! THIS IS A HOLLYWOOD VERSION OF THE SHELLEY BOOK. THE MONSTER DOES NOT TALK IN OUR VERSION!

BUT... I... I'M AN ACTOR! IF THERE ARE NO LINES, I DON'T THINK I'D...



LISTEN, WHATEVER YOUR NAME IS! MAGNUS PICTURES IS ON THE ROCKS. ONE MORE FLOP AND WE'RE BANKRUPT! SO WE'RE GONNA PRODUCE A MONEYSMAKER... A HORROR PICTURE TO END ALL HORROR PICTURES. IF YOU WANT THE PART... OKAY. IF NOT... I'LL GET SOMEBODY ELSE!

BELA MOVED DOWN THE TABLE...POURED ANOTHER GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE...

SO I TOOK THE PART! MY STOMACH SCREAMED LOUDER THAN MY PRIDE! AND THAT'S WHEN I MET YOU, MARCEL DUVAL. YOU WERE THE MAKE-UP MAN. REMEMBER HOW YOU LOOKED ME OVER?...



SUCH A MILD-LOOKING MAN I MUST MAKE HORRIBLE! I AM NO PRODUCER OF MIRACLES, MAYNOR!

HE'S GOT THE HEIGHT, DUVAL! DO THE BEST YOU CAN!



'REMEMBER HOW YOU WORKED ON ME, MARCEL... CREATING A MONSTER WITH GREASEPAIN AND PUTTY AND ADHESIVE CEMENT... HIDING THE MILD-MANNERED MAN BEHIND A MASK OF HORROR...'



VOILA!

TERRIFIC, MARCEL! TERRIFIC!

BELA POURED ANOTHER GLASS...

AND, YOU, GEORGE ROBINS. IT WAS YOU WHO DREAMED UP THE FANTASTIC SCHEME...



WE'LL PLAY UP THE MONSTER, SEE! WE'LL BILL HIM AS THE STAR... THIS KARDIFF GUY! WE'LL TELL THE PUBLIC HE'S THE MOST HORRIBLE THING THAT EVER WALKED ACROSS A MOVIE SCREEN...



WE'LL HAVE AN AMBU-LANCE PARKED OUTSIDE THE THEATER ON PREVIEW NIGHT! WE'LL HAVE PEOPLE SCARED BEFORE THEY EVEN GO IN!



IT'LL EITHER GO OVER WITH A BANG... OR LAY A BIG EGG!

BELA MOVED ON, STOPPING AT THE CHAIR OF SIDNEY CHASE, TREASURER OF MAGNUS PICTURES.

"FRANKENSTEIN" DIDN'T LAY AN EGG, DID IT, SID? IT WAS A BIG HIT! IT MADE THREE TIMES ITS INITIAL INVESTMENT, DIDN'T IT?



AND THE PUBLIC CLAMORED FOR MORE. THEY CLAMORED FOR MORE OF THIS FRIGHTENING HORRIBLE STAR YOU'D DISCOVERED...

HE'S A GOLD MINE! WE'VE GOT TO MAKE MORE HORROR PICTURES WITH KARDIFF!

LISTEN! ANOTHER NOVEL MIGHT BE THE ANSWER! HOW ABOUT DRACULA?



FIRST, A MAN-MADE MONSTER... NEXT A VAMPIRE. AFTER DRACULA OPENED, MY NAME BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH HORROR AND MAYHEM AND DEATH. ME, BELA KARDIFF... HARMLESS, QUIET, MILD-MANNERED BELA KARDIFF...

LOOK, MAMA! IT'S HIM! OOOOH!

YOU... YOU OUGHT TO BE ASHAMED OF YOURSELF... GOING AROUND FRIGHTENING CHILDREN!



I TRIED TO STOP THIS MAD AVALANCHE THAT HAD CAUGHT ME UP IN ITS WILD DOWNHILL PLUNGE. REMEMBER, MILTON?

GIVE ME A CHANCE AT A DECENT DRAMATIC PART, MILT. I BEG OF YOU. I DON'T WANT TO BE TYPED LIKE THIS!

LOOK, BELA. I'M ONLY A PRODUCER. I DO WHAT THE BOYS UPSTAIRS TELL ME. YOUR NEXT PICTURE IS THE MUMMY'S HAND!



AND SO, WHILE EACH OF YOU MOVED UP THE EXECUTIVE LADDER, I SUNK LOWER AND LOWER...

YOU'RE PRESIDENT, NOW, LARRY! IF YOU SAID THE WORD, I COULD DO IT! PLEASE! I BEG OF YOU! GIVE ME A CHANCE AT SOMETHING ELSE...

I'D BE CRAZY, BELA. YOU'RE WORTH A FORTUNE AS YOU ARE! WHY KILL THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE PROVERBIAL EGG?



I WAS A MUMMY... A WEREWOLF... A ZOMBIE... EVERYTHING SINISTER AND DESPICABLE AND UGLY. I MURDERED AGAIN AND AGAIN ON THE SCREEN...

YOU'LL KNOCK 'EM DEAD IN THIS SCENE, BELA!

YES! I SUPPOSE SO... ANOTHER HIT, L.B.!



OH, I DON'T DENY THAT I WAS FINANCIALLY REWARDED FOR THIS SELF-DEGRADATION. I HAD A NICE HOME IN BEVERLY HILLS, A SWIMMING POOL, A CHAUFFERED GAR... EVERYTHING A STAR SHOULD HAVE... EXCEPT SELF-PRIDE...

GOT THE NEW SCRIPT, BELA! YOU PLAY A GHOUL IN THIS!

NO! NO! I WON'T! NOT A GHOUL! THAT'S TOO MUCH!



"BUT I **PLAYED** THE PART. I WAS **TRAPPED** BY THEN, THERE WERE **BILLS** TO PAY, **NOTES** TO MEET. I WAS **AFRAID** TO GIVE UP THE LUXURIES I ENJOYED. I **PLAYED** 'THE **HIDEOUS** **GHOUL**.' AND AFTER THE **PREVIEW**..."

SAME OLD THING!

YEAH! DEFINITELY A "B" PICTURE!

MAGNUS BETTER START TRYING OTHER THINGS!



"IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE END. THE **PREVIEWERS'** SENTIMENTS WERE MULTIPLIED THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. THE PUBLIC WAS TIRED OF HORROR PICTURES. 'THE **HIDEOUS** **GHOUL**.' **LOST** **MONEY!** THE NEXT... 'FRANKENSTEIN MEETS A WEREWOLF', IN WHICH I **PLAYED** **BOTH** PARTS... WAS A **MISERABLE FAILURE**..."

SORRY, BELA. THE PARTY IS OVER! WE'RE **DROPPING** HORROR PICTURES. THEY'RE NO LONGER A **MONEY-MAKING PROPOSITION**...

THAT'S **FINE** WITH ME, SID. I'LL SEE WHAT **PLANS** L.B. HAS FOR ME **NOW!**



"I WENT TO SEE YOU, LARRY..."

SORRY, BELA. YOU'RE TIRED. WE COULDN'T USE YOU FOR ANYTHING GENTLE! THE PUBLIC WILL ALWAYS ASSOCIATE YOU WITH **HORROR** AND **DEATH!**

YOU MEAN I'M **THROUGH**, LARRY... **WASHED UP... FINISHED!** THAT'S WHAT YOU MEAN!



"I WENT TO YOU, MILT..."

MILT! GIVE ME THE CHANCE! I CAN ACT! GIVE ME THE CHANCE!

I'D BE OUT OF MY **MIND**, BELA! IF... IF **HORROR COMES BACK**, I'LL GIVE YOU A **RING!**



"I EVEN APPEALED TO YOU, MARCEL..."

I'LL CHANGE MY **NAME**. YOU CAN GIVE ME A NEW **FACE... CHARACTER PARTS... ANYTHING!**

IT IS NOT UP TO ME, BELA! I AM **SORRY!**



"I WAS A HAS-BEEN... A **FADED** STAR. THE ERA WAS OVER..."

THIS MEANS YOU'LL HAVE TO SELL YOUR **BEVERLY HILLS** PLACE, BELA! YOU'RE **BROKE**...

TAKE CARE OF IT FOR ME, SID!



"I **SLIPPED** DOWN... DOWN. I LEFT **HOLLYWOOD** AND WENT TO **NEW YORK**. I TRIED **RADIO**..."

GOOD-EVENING, MYSTERY FANS. THIS IS YOUR **HOST** IN **CHILLS**, **BELA KARDIFF**, WELCOMING YOU ONCE MORE TO THE **TERROR THEATER**...

IT WAS **GOOD** ONCE! BUT THIS STUFF IS **PASSE** NOW! CANCEL OUR **SPONSORSHIP** AT THE END OF THE **CONTRACT!**



A SECOND-RATE PRODUCER OF BROADWAY PLAYS MANAGED TO GATHER ENOUGH FINANCIAL BACKING USING MY NAME TO STAR ME IN A HORROR PLAY...



NO! OH, LORD! NO!
IT'S YOU!

YES, SMILEY! I'VE
COME BACK...

THE CRITICS PANNED IT. THE PLAY CLOSED. THE BACKERS LOST A FORTUNE AND I NEVER GOT MY SALARY. THE PRODUCER SKIPPED. I WAS FORCED TO BORROW...



JUST TILL I'M
WORKING AGAIN,
GEORGE! FOR OLD
TIMES' SAKE!

THIS IS MY LAST HANDOUT,
BELA! I'M SORRY! I GOT MY
OWN TROUBLES! BESIDES,
I'M GOING BACK TO MAGNUS
NEXT WEEK!

I MANAGED TO SCRAPE ALONG BY ALLOWING A PUBLISHER OF SECOND-RATE BOOKS TO USE MY NAME ON A HORROR TALE ANTHOLOGY...



LYLE BOO

I SLEPT IN CHEAP HOTELS...

WELL, IF IT ISN'T THE
SPOOK MAN HIMSELF!
WHO'D YOU MURDER
TODAY, "FRANKENSTEIN"?



PLEASE...
MY KEY...

I ATE IN CHEAP RESTAURANTS...

WHAT'LL IT BE,
MIST—WELL, LOOK
WHO'S HAUNTING
MY JOINT! DRACULA!
IN PERSON!



COFFEE,
PLEASE...

IT WAS T.V. THAT SAVED ME FROM ENDING UP ON SKID ROW. T.V. IN ITS INFANCY... HUNGRY FOR NAMES... EVEN HAS BEEN NAMES...



IT'S AN AWFUL PLAY, BELA...
AND IT DON'T PAY MUCH...
\$350. IF YOU...

I'LL DO IT!
I'LL DO IT!

OF COURSE, IT WAS A HORROR PLAY! WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE? BUT, IT FED ME FOR TWO MONTHS. AND THEN I GOT ANOTHER CALL... AND ANOTHER... I WASN'T GETTING RICH, BUT AT LEAST I WAS WORKING...



CAMERA ONE! DOLLY IN ON
KARDIFF'S FACE...

GRIMACE, BELA!
MAKE A HORROR...

BELA KARDIFF FINISHED POURING
THE LAST GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE...

THEY TELL ME IT WAS
YOUR IDEA, EDDIE...THIS
TESTIMONIAL DINNER.
EDDIE BAGGMAN, MY
OLD CAMERAMAN...

WELL,
BELA...
I...



YOU CERTAINLY DID
YOUR JOB WELL, EDDIE...
BACK IN THOSE DAYS
YOU PUT ME ON FILM
IN ALL MY HORROR...
ALL MY VILENESS
AND EVIL...

IT WAS
MY JOB,
BELA...



BELA TURNED AND STRODE BACK TO
HIS SEAT. HE PICKED UP HIS GLASS...

OF COURSE, EDDIE. I UNDER-
STAND! YOU HAD TO MAKE ME
HORRIBLE. YOU, TOO, MARCEL...
AND YOU, GEORGE... MILT... SID...
DON... LARRY. YOU ALL HAD TO...



BELA LIFTED HIS GLASS HIGH.

YOU ALL DID WHAT YOU HAD TO DO!
AND SO, I OFFER THIS TOAST...
TO THE THINGS YOU ALL DID FOR ME!



THE MEN AROUND THE TABLE STOOD AND ORAINED THEIR GLASSES...



AND BELA KARDIFF SMILED...

YOU KNOW, GENTLEMEN...WHEREVER I WENT
AFTER MY STAR FADED HERE IN HOLLYWOOD, I
COULD NEVER ESCAPE THOSE THINGS YOU
DID FOR ME. I COULD NEVER LIVE DOWN
THE STEREDTYPE YOU'D CAST OF ME...THE
HORROR CHARACTER...THE MURDERER.
SO I FINALLY ACCEPTED IT!



AND PUT DOWN HIS UNTOUCHED GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE.

I AM WHAT YOU MADE ME, GENTLEMEN!
I PUT STRYCHNINE IN YOUR CHAMPAGNE!

GOOD
LORD!
CHOKO!



THE END

TIMETABLE

Mr. Gardent slammed the front door furiously, his face livid with rage. Snorting savagely, he hurried toward the subway. This fight he just had with Sylvia was the last he was going to stomach; it was time to scare the life out of that ungrateful wife of his!

All day long at the office, while he toyed aimlessly with his paperweight and mechanical pencil, Mr. Gardent's mind was a turmoil of plans to exact vengeance for the heartache he had been subjected to. At four o'clock he banged his fist against his desk top and brayed with delight. To his puzzled secretary he blurted that he was going home an hour early... all the way to his house he fondled the idea he had concocted. Polished it, in fact, until it gleamed like a jewel of a plan. He'd shock his wife out of ten years' growth!

It was Sylvia's bridge day, he thought as he quietly opened the front door and strode toward the bathroom. She wouldn't be home 'til a few minutes after five... give him plenty of time to gulp down the huge overdose of sleeping pills. He had carefully checked on the strength of those pills at the time his prescription was filled: if he was rushed to the hospital within *two hours* of the time he swallowed the lethal overdose, he'd be right as rain within twenty-four hours!

Mr. Gardent settled comfortably into his leather den chair, puffed his pipe until the last ember had turned to cinder. He twirled the bottle cap, tilted the glass jar until a mound of greenish pills spilled into his palm. He checked his watch once more. It was ten minutes before five. Sylvia would be home within a half-hour. She'd find him sprawled here in the den, the fake suicide note he'd prepared pinned to his shirt. He knew Sylvia

as well as he knew his own reflection in the shaving mirror... she'd probably been devastated by that argument they'd had this morning. She'd be home on time, tearfully begging him to forgive the hasty words she'd uttered. She'd play the part he'd outlined for her... wail into the phone, hold his hand tightly on the ambulance trip across town, act like an angel for at least a month!

Mr. Gardent smirked, opened his mouth and let the pile of green pills slide down his throat. The druggist had told him five pills would disturb his nervous system, ten would probably prove fatal unless steps were taken within two hours. He giggled as the twentieth capsule went down his gullet. Then, beginning to feel delightfully drowsy, he settled deep into the chair. He closed his eyes, beginning to dream of the gentleness with which he would accept Sylvia's tremulous pleas for forgiveness. He'd be gracious, he reassured himself, as his chin settled on his chest and the pills took effect.

* * * * *

Once, at five minutes before seven o'clock, Mr. Gardent's body trembled and a half-choked moan escaped from lips already starting to turn purple. By seven o'clock his tortured writhing had stopped completely. And fifteen feet from his body, behind the closed door of the bedroom, Sylvia Gardent's body had turned cold. Pinned to her dress was a carefully prepared note. "Didn't go to the bridge game today," it said. "Instead, I took twenty of your sleeping pills. I swallowed them at exactly four o'clock. In two hours... by *six o'clock*, unless I am rushed to a hospital... I will be dead!"

E.C. WENT TO SEA IN SEARCH OF ANOTHER NEW TREND...



AND WE CAME UP WITH...
SAGAS OF THE SEA, SHIPS, PLUNDER AND...

PIRACY

**NOW YOU SEARCH
FOR IT!**

BUT IF YOU *CAN'T FIND PIRACY*
AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND, YOU
CAN **SUBSCRIBE!** JUST FILL OUT
THE COUPON AND MAIL, TOGETHER
WITH **ONE HUNDRED PIECES OF
CENT** (THAT'S ONE BUCK, LAND-
LUBBERS!), TO:

THE SEASICK EDITORS OF
PIRACY
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE STREET
N.Y.C. 12, N.Y.

OKAY, BILGE RATS! YOU SHANGHAIED ME!
I ENCLOSE \$1.00 FOR THE NEXT EIGHT ISSUES
OF **PIRACY!**

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

STATE _____

ZONE
NO. _____

SHOCK TALK

Dear Editors,

Congratulations! I have just finished two of the greatest stories I have ever read. "Raw Deal" kept me guessing up to the last panel. It was marvelous. As for the second story, "The Confidant," it left me staring at the wall. It takes real guts to print such a story. And after reading it, you began to realize some of the horrors that can take place in America when stupid, ignorant mobs start taking the law into their own hands, and go on a rampage. Feldstein and Wood deserve a medal for their excellent work in the fields of racial tolerance and human understanding. You guys are doing a great job. Again I say congratulations.

Jim Seff
Baltimore, Md.

... There is no other one-two punch in the comic book industry like Feldstein and Wood and their "off-the-beaten-path" stories. Feldstein's writing and Wood's drawing seem to go together naturally. Being a good Catholic, I would like to say that "The Confidant" is the greatest story I have ever read.

David McGill
Slidell, La.

... In SS No. 15, I thought "The Confidant" was one of the best I've ever read. A real masterpiece. In fact, the whole magazine was exceptionally good, but "The Confidant" was really great. As long as you present stories of this nature, I'll be an ardent Shock SuspenStories fan.

Dale Chilson
Valva, N.C.

I have just finished your story, "The Confidant," and it's one of the most interesting stories I've ever read. It gives a true picture of the seal of Confession of the Roman Catholic Religion, and how a priest suffered even death, rather than break the sacred seal. These stories about religious and racial persecution are the best you guys have done yet. Keep up the good work.

(Name withheld by request)
Peru, Ill.

... In case some of you who read E.C.'s story, "The Confidant," do not understand the ending, let me explain it to you. A Catholic priest is bound by a "Sacramental Secret" not to reveal anything that has been confessed to him.

(Signed) A Catholic
Trenton, N.J.

... This is the first time in my life that I have ever written to any editor about any kind of magazine, but I must compliment you on Shock SuspenStories. I only wish there were more books like this one. It is the best, the very best.

E. A. Anderson CSJ
Naval Station
Newport, Rhode Island

... Thanks for another great shocker, "The Confidant." Thank God we are outgrowing mob violence—not one lynching in 1953. I feel that men like you are mainly responsible for this great record.

Nelson Bridwell
Oklahoma City, Okla.

... I have read all your stories against segregation and racial prejudice, but you have really proven your ability in "The Confidant." It was the most heart-warming story I have ever read. Keep up the good work and give us more stories of this sort.

J. S.
Cumberland, Maryland

... I am fifteen years of age and was confined to bed several months ago with Rheumatic Fever. I just read your No. 15 issue of Shock. Believe me, it was really a thriller, especially the story "For Crying Out Loud." Why, when I finished, I almost fell out of bed.

C. J. R.
Lebanon, Ohio

... Do you call No. 15 issue a mag? First you present "Raw Deal" which made my feet come through my mouth, stomach first. Then, "The Confidant" which made me cry my head off. What are you guys trying to do, kill me?

Eldridge Page
Lynchburg, Va.

... Nothing has ever made me as mad as those creeps who keep writing criticisms against the excellent stories you print against segregation. Such people do not deserve America and America certainly doesn't need them. Your stories are the best and I want to compliment you on them. You should put one of them in every E.C. Mag.

James Curtis Jackson
Robstown, Texas

You, the Editors of Shock SuspenStories, have initiated a wonderful thing, a slap at prejudice. Keep up the good work. Publish at least one "tolerance" story in each issue. You will not lose customers, you will gain friends.

Dorothy G. Mentzer
Lancaster, Pa.

Well... no new friends this time! We racked our brains, but couldn't come up with anything that we felt was worthy of following "Blood Brothers," "The Whipping," "The Confidant," et al! —ed.

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THE ASSASSIN

DRIZZLE... THE KIND OF GOLD MISTY DRIZZLE YOUR FLESH SOPS UP LIKE A SPONGE... THE KIND OF DRIZZLE THAT WRAPS ITSELF AROUND YOU LIKE AN ICY-WET SHROUD. I STAND IN THE SHADOWS IN THE DRIZZLE THINKIN' ABOUT THAT REDHEADED GAL BACK IN CHI, AND HOW I OUGHT TO BE WITH HER INSTEAD OF SHIVERIN' IN THE RAIN OF A NEW YORK NIGHT. BUT THROUGH MY SKIN-THIN LEATHER GLOVE, I FEEL THE BLUE-BLACK COLD OF THE COLT .38 IN MY TRENCHCOAT POCKET, AND THEN I THINK OF HOW A FIVE-C-NOTE FOR A COUPLE OF HOURS' WORK IS WORTH FLYING EAST FOR AND LEAVIN' A REDHEAD FOR A LITTLE WHILE, ONLY WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE ON A LOUSY NIGHT LIKE THIS ONE. SO I WAIT. AND FINALLY, MY MARK COMES OUT OF HIS LUSH, DRY APARTMENT BUILDING. I SQUEEZE BACK INTO THE SHADOWS AND GRIP THE LOADED HEATER IN MY POCKET A LITTLE TIGHTER...

THE DOORMAN STEPS OUT INTO THE SHINY-BLACK GUTTER AND BLOWS HIS WHISTLE. I WORRY 'CAUSE IF MY MARK GETS A CAB, I'LL PROBABLY LOSE HIM.



BUT THEN THE DOORMAN STEPS BACK UNDER THE CANOPY AFTER SEVERAL TRIES WITH HIS LITTLE TIN TWEETER, AND I BREATHE EASIER. HE SHRUGS AND MY MARK STARTS HOOFIN' IT. I TAKE A LAST DEEP DRAG, THEN FLICK MY BUTT LOOPIN' INTO THE GUTTER. IT STICKS THERE IN THE WET, HISSES, AND THE RED GLOW ON THE TIP GOES OUT FAST. I STEP FROM THE SHADOWS...



I START WALKIN' BEHIND HIM, MY STEPS IN RHYTHM WITH HIS. I CURSE THE WETNESS THAT MAKES A SQUISH-IN NOISE UNDER MY RUBBER SOLES. BUT THE WET IS GOOD TOO. THE WET MAKES IT A PERFECT NIGHT FOR HUNTIN'...*MAN*-HUNTIN'...



EMPTY STREETS...DARK, DESERTED STREETS. NOW HE'S JUST A BLACK HULK MOVIN' AHEAD OF ME, THEN HE'S BATHED IN THE SOFT YELLOW LAMPPOST LIGHT, THE MIST-DROPS ON HIS HAT AND COAT GLITTERIN'...



QUIET, EMPTY, GLITTERIN' WET STREETS. THAT'S THE THING ABOUT MY JOB. IT'S GOT TO BE QUIET..



IT'S GOT TO BE SOMEPLACE WHERE NOBODY'LL SEE... WHERE I CAN TRIGGER MY MARK AND RUN... WHERE THERE'LL BE NO WITNESSES. LIKE AN ALLEY...LIKE A STREET OF CLOSED STORES OR WAREHOUSES.



NOW HE STOPS. HE LOOKS INTO A STORE WINDOW. MAYBE HE'S GOT A QUEER FEELIN' ALONG HIS SPINE BUT DON'T KNOW WHY. HE DON'T KNOW HE'S A MARK. NOT YET. I STOP. I LIGHT A BUTT, CUPPIN' MY MITTS TO HIDE THE GLOW. I WAIT...



HE KEEPS STARIN' INTO THE WINDOW, I GOTTA MOVE ON BEFORE HE GETS TO WONDERIN'. I PASS HIM AND GET THE URGE TO GUN HIM RIGHT THERE AND RUN... TAKE MY CHANCES... BUT I DON'T. THEY COULD'VE GOT *ANY* PUNK TO DO A JOB LIKE *THAT*! BUT THEY WANTED A PRO...AND I COST 'EM A COOL FIVE C'S, PLUS EXPENSES, TO BRING IN FROM CHI. I'M GONNA GIVE 'EM A CLEAN, PRO JOB... WITH NO WITNESSES..



UP THE STREET, I DUCK INTO AN ALLEY. I WAIT IN THE DARKNESS TILL I HEAR HIS FOOTSTEPS. I SUCK IN MY BREATH AND HOLD IT TILL MY BELLY ACHES. HE ANGLES ACROSS THE STREET BEFORE HE REACHES ME.



FOR NEARLY AN HOUR I PAD ALONG AFTER HIM, STALK-
IN' THROUGH THE HAGGIN', NUMBIN' DRIZZLE. WHEN HE
STOPS... I STOP. WHEN HE TURNS A CORNER... I TURN.
PATIENCE. THAT'S THE WORD TO DESCRIBE MY JOB:
PATIENCE. FIVE HUNDRED BUCKS WORTH OF PATIENCE.
THEN IT HAPPENS. HE MUST'VE FELT MY EYES ON HIS
BACK, 'CAUSE HE TURNS HIS HEAD AN' TAKES A QUICK
GANOER AT ME...



I TURN A CORNER AFTER HIM AND
THE FIRST THING I SEE IS THIS
SHINY BLACK RAINCOAT WITH A
BADGE. I QUICK CUT DOWN TO A
SLOW WALK. I SEE MY MARK LOOK-
IN' AT THE COP LIKE HE WANTS TO
TELL HIM ABOUT ME. BUT HE DON'T.
'CAUSE HE STILL AIN'T SURE...



I GO IN FURTHER. I LISTEN FOR
HIS BREATHIN'. A CAR PASSES THE
OTHER END OF THE ALLEY, ITS HEAD-
LIGHTS FLOODIN' IT WITH LIGHT. I
DON'T SEE MY MARK.



HE SCOOTS AROUND THE NEXT
CORNER A GOOD HUNDRED FEET
AHEAD OF ME. JUST AS I MAKE
THE TURN, I SEE HIM QUICK INTO
AN ALLEY...



IT'S TAKIN' A CHANCE, BUT I
PULL A LITTLE FLASHLIGHT FROM
MY POCKET AND NEEDLE THE BEAM
AROUND. MY .38 IS ALREADY OUT,
AND I GOT THE SAFETY OFF...



NOW, SLOW... VERY SLOW... HE BEGINS TAKIN' LONGER,
QUICKER STEPS. I STICK BEHIND LIKE THERE'S AN
INVISIBLE ROPE BETWEEN US. HE AIN'T SURE YET, HE
DON'T LOOK AROUND, BUT HE MUST FEEL ME BEHIND HIM.



I GO IN SLOW, EVERY MUSCLE IN MY
BODY KNOTTED TIGHT. NOW! NOW,
IF I CAN NAIL HIM! THIS IS THE
KIND OF PLACE... A DARK ALLEY
BETWEEN TWO LOFT BUILDIN'S. NO
HOUSES. NO STORES. NO PEOPLE.
ONLY WHERE IS HE?...



ALL OF A SUDDEN, I HEAR HIM
BREAK FROM SOMEWHERE BEHIND
ME, WHININ' LIKE A SCARED CAT AS
HE RUNS. THE SUCKER'S FRAMED IN
THE ALLEY ENTRANCE LIKE A SITTHIN'
DUCK. I TAKE CAREFUL AIM...



BUT I DON'T SHOOT. 'CAUSE I HEAR THIS TALKIN' AND LAUGHIN' AND TWO SAILORS ON THE TOWN PASS THE ALLEY AND EYE MY MARK AS HE COMES SCAMPERIN' OUT...



I CURSE 'EM UNDER MY BREATH AND HIGH-TAIL IT OUT AFTER MY MARK. HE'S WALKIN' NEAR 'EM, LOOKIN' BACK AT ME. NOW HE KNOWS HE KNOWS FOR SURE HE'S A MARK AND I'M AFTER HIM.



I STICK CLOSE BEHIND. I FEEL LIKE A JERK WALKIN' IN A SLOPPY DRIZZLE...COLD AND MISERABLE...JUST TO GUN A GUY I DON'T EVEN KNOW. I MAKE MYSELF THINK OF THE FIVE C'S WAITIN' IF I DELIVER. I ALSO THINK OF THE REDHEAD BACK IN CHI, SO I STICK, AND SOON THE TWO TARS HEAD INTO A BAR.



NOW MY MARK IS ALONE AND HE'S PLENTY SCARED. HE DODGES AROUND THIS CORNER AND THAT...



HE CROSSES STREETS. HE BACKTRACKS. MY MARK KNOWS I'M FOLLOWIN' HIM AND HE'S SOURMIN' AND RUNNIN' LIKE A RABBIT RUNNIN' FROM A HOUND.



AND LIKE A RABBIT, HE FINDS A HOLE IN THE GROUND AND DIVES INTO IT, A SUBWAY KIOSK.



I HIT THE TURNSTILES JUST AS A TRAIN PULLS IN. I FISH FOR A DIME BUT IT DON'T FIT AND I SWEAR OUT LOUD. YOU GOTTA HAVE A TOKEN...



THERE'S NO TIME, SO I VAULT THE TURNSTILE AND JUST MAKE IT INTO THE CAR AS THE DOORS SLAM SHUT...



I STAY ON THE PLATFORM AT THE END OF THE CAR WHERE I CAN LOOK PAST THE SEA OF SLEEPY, EMPTY, STARING, SUBWAY FACES TO WHERE MY MARK SITS BREATHIN' HARD AND WIPIN' THE SWEAT FROM HIS BROW.



WHEN WE PULL INTO THE NEXT STATION, MY MARK GETS OFF. HE'S FIGURED HE'S LOST ME AND HE'S BREATHIN' EASIER. BUT AS HE CLIMBS THE EXIT STAIRS HE LOOKS AROUND AND HIS FACE GOES ASH WHITE...



MY MARK'S WALKED INTO IT THIS TIME...THE KIND OF NEIGHBORHOOD I NEED FOR THE JOB. NO WITNESSES...NOTHIN' BUT HIM AND ME AND BLACK, EMPTY, RAIN-SOAKED STREETS



THEN I SEE THE RUSTED LADDER HANGIN' FROM THE FIRE-ESCAPE LEADIN' UP THE OLD ABANDONED BUILDIN'. SOME WINDOWS GOT BOARDS OVER 'EM AND SOME'S JUST GAPIN' HOLES. AND MY MARK'S DISSAPPEAR- IN' INTO ONE OF THOSE



I HEAR HIS FEET POUNDIN' UP THE STAIRS AND LOOSE PLASTER DUST IS FLOATIN' AROUND SO I CAN TASTE IT, AND IT GRINDS GRITTY BETWEEN MY TEETH. I SCRAMBLE BACK DOWN THE CORRIDOR AND TAKE THE SHAKY SAGGIN' STAIRS TWO-AT-A-TIME.



HE TRIES AN ALLEY AGAIN, FIGURIN' IF HE GAVE ME THE SLIP THAT WAY ONCE, IT'LL WORK AGAIN.



I CLIMB, THINKIN' HOW THIS IS LIKE A CAT-AND-MOUSE GAME WITH A FIVE-C-NOTE PRIZE AT THE END OF IT. I GET INTO THE BLACK, ROT-STINKIN' LOFT AND POKE IN EVERY CORNER WITH MY LIGHT.



BEFORE I CAN GLIM THE SUCKER, I FEEL A COLD DRAUGHT AND I KNOW HE'S MADE THE ROOF. WHEN I GET THERE, HE'S STANDIN' ON THE PARAPET, READY TO JUMP.



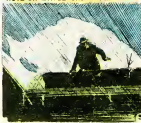
I GO IN WITH MY POCKET FLASH LIT AND I GOTTA SMILE. THERE'S WALLS ON THREE SIDES. IT'S A BLIND ALLEY. BUT HE'S NOWHERE IN SIGHT.



I GO OUT INTO A LITTER-CLUTTERED CORRIDOR AND MOVE DOWN IT. SOMEWHERE BEHIND ME I HEAR HIM STUMBLE AND GROAN.



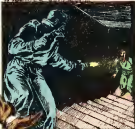
THEN HE'S GONE, THE CRAZY IDIOT. I RUN TO THE SPOT AND SEE HE'S LEAPED TO AN ADJOINING BUILDIN' ACROSS AN AIR-SHAFT. IT'S A BIG JUMP. FOR HIM, THERE WAS NOthin' TO LOSE. FOR ME, IT'S A TOSSUP BETWEEN LOSIN' A BIG FAT FIVE-C-NOTE OR MAYBE CROAKIN'...



I SHUT MY EYES AND TAKE THE LEAP...



I FOLLOW HIM INTO THE ROOF ENTRANCE OF THE NEXT BUILDING, AND I CAN HEAR HIM GOIN' DOWN THE STAIRS. I FLICK ON MY FLASH AND CATCH HIM IN A CIRCLE OF LIGHT WHERE THE STAIRS END IN A NARROW CREEK...



I KNOW I GOT HIM NOW. I'VE SEEN THAT LOOK OF TERRORIZED SURRENDER BEFORE. HE BACKS UP...FINDS HIS LAST FAINT HOPE...A DOOR...AND STUMBLES THROUGH...



MY MARK STUMBLES INTO A ROOM WHERE IT'S PITCH BLACK. I HEAR HIM SLUMP INTO A CORNER, BREATHIN' LOUD, WHEEZIN' THROUGH HIS FLEM-CHOKED THROAT. I PICK HIM UP WITH MY LIGHT. I GOT HIM WHERE I WANT HIM NOW...WITH NO WITNESSES...ALONE...



HIS FACE IS A SICK-GREEN AND HE'S BUG-EYED, BUT THERE'S NO PLEADIN' ON HIS FACE 'CAUSE HE KNOWS I GOT A JOB TO DO. ALREADY I'M FEELIN' THAT FIVE-C-NOTE IN MY POCKET AS I SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER...



THE BLAST ECHOES AWAY LIKE THE FLAT WE'RE IN IS BIG AS A BARN. HE FALLS OVER...THE TOP OF HIS HEAD GONE IN A BLOODY SMEAR, AND THEN THE SCREAMIN' STARTS...SHRIEKIN' AND HOLLERIN'...AND LIGHTS START FLASHIN' ON...BRIGHT LIGHTS...



IN A COUPLE OF SECONDS THE PLACE IS CRAWLIN'... WOMEN SQUEELIN' AND MEN POURIN' DOWN THE AISLES TOWARD ME. YEAH, THAT'S WHAT I SAID! 'AISLES', ME! THE OLD PRO! I GUN MY MARK IN A THEATRE... BEFORE FIVE HUNDRED PAIRS OF EYES...



IT TURNS OUT I'VE WALKED IN ON THE OPENING SCENE OF A PLAY ABOUT PRESIDENT MCKINLEY AND THE GUY WHAT SHOT HIM. IT'S CALLED "THE ASSASSIN". THERE'S A TWIST, HUH? WHOSE PICTURE DO YOU SUPPOSE IS ON A FIVE-O-BILL? YEAH...

The OPERATION

THE REASON WHY I CAN TELL THIS STORY NOW IS BECAUSE I AM NO LONGER IN THE "FENCE" BUSINESS, WHICH IS THE UNDERWORLD TERM FOR A MERCHANT OF STOLEN GOODS, HAVING PULLED A FEW STRINGS WITH POLITICO FRIENDS OF MINE WITH WHOM I USED TO DEAL BEFORE THEY ACCUMULATED THEIR FORTUNES AND BECAME HONEST UPSTANDING PILLARS OF SOCIETY AND DEVOTED SERVANTS OF THE PEOPLE. OFTEN, NOW, WHILE I AM RINGING UP WIN-TICKETS FOR THE PONY PLAYERS WHO COME TO MY TWO DOLLAR WINDOW, I THINK OF ALLIE AND BIMMY AND DOC SLATER AND THE SWEET LITTLE PROFITABLE RACKET THEY ENJOYED UNTIL GREGG STEPPED IN AND BROUGHT THEM TO THE PARTING OF THE WAYS. IT HAPPENED LIKE THIS...

ALLIE AND BIMMY AND DOC SLATER WERE IN THE SMUGGLING BUSINESS, WHICH CAN BE VERY LUCRATIVE IF YOU PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT. IN EUROPE, ALLIE AND BIMMY COLLECTED DIAMONDS...



THIS COLLECTION WOULD BE CARRIED ON SWIFTLY AND CONVINCINGLY... AS ALLIE AND BIMMY WERE SWIFT AND CONVINCING GENTLEMEN...



HAVING LIFTED A GOODLY HAUL OF THE SPARKLING BAUBLES, ALLIE AND BIMMY WOULD RETURN POST HASTE TO THEIR HIDEOUT, WHERE DOC SLATER WAITED WITH BAITED BREATH AND STEAMING STERILIZER...



DOC SLATER WOULD FINGER AND FONDLE THE GLITTERING CARBON PELLETS, FOR IF THERE WAS ONE THING DOC SLATER LOVED BETTER THAN HIS SHINY SCALPELS, IT WAS GLITTERING DIAMONDS. PERHAPS THAT EXPLAINS WHY HE'D DECIDED TO USE HIS SURGICAL SKILL FOR SMUGGLING PURPOSES RATHER THAN FOR IMPROVING HEALTH...



WHY, IT'S YOUR TURN, ISN'T IT, BIMMY? TAKE OFF YOUR SHIRT AND LIE DOWN ON THE TABLE...

I AM BEGINNING TO FEEL LIKE AN OLD MATRESS!

I WILL PREPARE THE ANESTHETIC!



THUSLY WOULD FOLLOW THE EXTREMELY CLEVELER METHOD WHEREBY, UNDETECTED, BIMMY AND ALLIE AND THE DOC WERE ABLE TO SMUGGLE OVER SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS WORTH OF DIAMONDS PAST THE EAGLE-EYED ALERT CUSTOMS INSPECTORS AND INTO OUR GRAND AND GLORIOUS COUNTRY OVER A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS..



AFTER THIS AFOREMENTIONED INCISION HAD HEALED SUFFICIENTLY, SAID PARTNER WOULD PURCHASE A STEAMSHIP TICKET AND BOARD A LINER BOUND FOR THE GOOD OLD U.S.A...

HAVE A NICE TIME, BIMMY!
I ALWAYS ENJOY MYSELF ON OCEAN LINERS, DOCTOR. AS A CHILD, I WAS CRAZY OVER SHUFFLEBOARD...



THE REMAINING PARTNER AND THE DOCTOR WOULD THEN ARRANGE RESERVATIONS ON AN OVERSEAS AIR-PLANE WHOSE LANDING-TIME IN NEW YORK COINCIDED WITH THE LINER'S ARRIVAL...

HOPE YOU HAD A PLEASANT FLIGHT, GENTLEMEN!
DELIGHTFUL! I COULDN'T SLEEP.



YES, THAT IS ABSOLUTELY CORRECT. NIMBLE-FINGERED DOC SLATER WOULD CUT OPEN ONE OF HIS TWO BOYS AND NEATLY PACK THE VALUABLE DIAMONDS IN AMONG A GOODY PORTION OF FATTY TISSUE SOMEWHERE ON SAID PARTNER'S PERSON. THEN HE WOULD CAREFULLY CLOSE THE INCISION..



SAID PARTNER, CARRYING THE DIAMOND HAUL BENEATH THE SURFACE OF HIS THICK SKIN, WOULD PASS UNDETECTED THROUGH CUSTOMS...

HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO DECLARE?
ONLY MY JOY AT RETURNING ONCE MORE TO THE LAND OF MY BIRTH!



AND HURRY, WITHOUT DELAY, TO THE DOCTOR'S NEW YORK APARTMENT AND HIS ANXIOUSLY WAITING COHORTS. THERE, ANOTHER OPERATION WOULD BE PERFORMED AND THE CONTRABAND CARGO WOULD BE REMOVED...



AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER, MY OLD MODEST BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENT WOULD BE GRACED WITH ALLIE AND BIMMY AND DOC'S CHARMING PRESENCES AS I EXAMINED AND VALUED SAID CONTRABAND CARGO...

A WORTHY EXAMPLE OF NATURE'S WORK, GENTLEMEN. I WILL BE HAPPY TO PAY YOU SEVEN THOUSAND DOLLARS FOR THE LOT!
IT IS AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE DOING BUSINESS WITH YOU, MILTON!



AS I MENTIONED PREVIOUSLY, ALLIE AND BIMMY AND DOC WERE ENGAGED IN A HIGHLY PROFITABLE OPERATION, AND I AM NOT ATTEMPTING TO MAKE A POOR PUN ON THE IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THEIR RACKET, BUT, AS I ALSO MENTIONED, GREED STEPPED IN. I BELIEVE THE THREE GENTLEMEN WERE IN ANTWERP, EUROPE'S DIAMOND CAPITAL, AT THE TIME...

I AM INTERESTED IN PURCHASING SOME DIAMONDS. I AM FROM AMERICA...

YOU HAVE COME AT PRECISELY THE RIGHT MOMENT, SIR. I HAVE JUST ACQUIRED A FABULOUS GEM...



THIS BEAUTIFUL TREASURE RECENTLY ARRIVED FROM RHODESIA, IT IS, AS YET, UNCUT AND UNPOLISHED. AT PRESENT IT WEIGHS NINETY-TWO CARATS... AND IS WORTH AT LEAST TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS IN U.S. CURRENCY...

IT... IT'S BEAUTIFUL! BUT... I AM INTERESTED IN MUCH SMALLER STONES, I'M AFRAID!



IT WOULD BE SUCH A SHAME TO CUT THIS UP INTO SEVERAL SMALL STONES...

OH, YES... A SHAME...



OH, WELL, THERE WILL BE OTHER CUSTOMERS, I AM SURE! NOW, LET ME SEE WHAT I HAVE FOR YOU...

BEAUTIFUL! SIMPLY BEAUTIFUL!



LIKE I SAID, GREED STEPPED IN. THE DOC FELL IN LOVE WITH THAT FABULOUS ROCK. ALTHOUGH HE LOOKED AT THE SMALLER STONES THE DEALER HAD TO OFFER HIM, HIS MIND WAS REALLY ON THAT GIANT BAUBLE...

WELL, THANK YOU! I'LL BE BACK!

DROP IN ANYTIME...



AND SO, DOCTOR SLATER MADE HIS PLANS. HE HAD TO HAVE THAT NINETY-TWO CARAT DIAMOND NO MATTER WHAT. HE JUST HAD TO...

TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY G'S!

THAT IS A LOT OF MOGLA!

YES! NOW, HERE'S WHAT WE DO...



AND SO, ONCE MORE, SWIFTLY AND CONVINCINGLY, ALLIE AND BIMMY MADE A COLLECTION...



... AND THE FABULOUS GEM WAS THEIRS...



BEAUTIFUL!
SIMPLY
BEAUTIFUL!

I WANT TO
CARRY THIS
ONE, DOC!

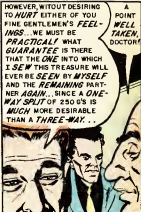
HEY...

YES, GREED HAD STEPPED IN... GREED
AND ITS COMPANION... MISTRUST...



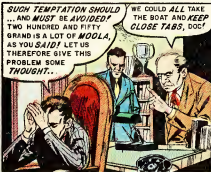
GENTLEMEN, THIS CALLS
FOR SOME THOUGHT!
A ROCK OF THIS CALIBRE
AND WORTH CAN SPELL
RETIREMENT FOR
ALL OF US...

THAT IS
A DELIGHT-
FUL
THOUGHT!



HOWEVER, WITHOUT DESIRING
TO HURT EITHER OF YOU
FINE GENTLEMEN'S FEEL-
INGS... WE MUST BE
PRACTICAL! WHAT
GUARANTEE IS THERE
THAT THE ONE INTO WHICH
I SEW THIS TREASURE WILL
EVER BE SEEN BY MYSELF
AND THE REMAINING PART-
NER AGAIN... SINCE A ONE-
WAY SPLIT OF 250 G'S IS
MUCH MORE DESIRABLE
THAN A THREE-WAY...

A
POINT
WELL
TAKEN,
DOCTOR!



SUCH TEMPTATION SHOULD
... AND MUST BE AVOIDED!
TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY
GRAND IS A LOT OF MOOLA,
AS YOU SAID! LET US
THEREFORE GIVE THIS
PROBLEM SOME
THOUGHT...

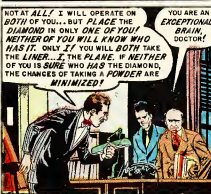
WE COULD ALL TAKE
THE BOAT AND KEEP
CLOSE TABS, DOC!



NO! TOO SUSPICIOUS!
THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER!
I WILL OPERATE ON BOTH
OF YOU...

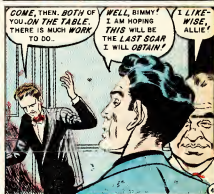
BOTH
OF US!?

YOU GOING
TO CUT
THE ROCK
IN HALF?



NOT AT ALL! I WILL OPERATE ON
BOTH OF YOU... BUT PLACE THE
DIAMOND IN ONLY ONE OF YOU!
NEITHER OF YOU WILL KNOW WHO
HAS IT. ONLY I! YOU WILL BOTH TAKE
THE LINER... I, THE PLANE. IF NEITHER
OF YOU IS SURE WHO HAS THE DIAMOND,
THE CHANCES OF TAKING A POWDER ARE
MINIMIZED!

YOU ARE AN
EXCEPTIONAL
BRAIN,
DOCTOR!



COME, THEN. BOTH OF
YOU ON THE TABLE.
THERE IS MUCH WORK
TO DO...

WELL, BIMMY!
I AM HOPING
THIS WILL BE
THE LAST SCAR
I WILL OBTAIN!

I LIKE
WISE,
ALLIE!

AND SO, FOR THE LAST TIME, DOC SLATER OPERATED. ONLY THIS TIME, IT WAS A MULTIPLE OPERATION.



BIMMY AND ALLIE PURCHASED THEIR STEAMSHIP TICKETS AND BOARDED THEIR LINER.



AND AFTER THEY'D SAILED, DOC SLATER MADE HIS AIRLINE RESERVATION...



WHEN BIMMY AND ALLIE CAME TO, THEY BOTH HAD NEAT LITTLE FRESHLY SEWN INCISIONS ON THEIR PERSONS AND NEITHER KNEW WHICH CONTAINED THE FABULOUS NINETY-TWO CARAT FORTUNE. AND IN A FEW WEEKS...



LIKE I SAID, IF YOU'RE A SMART COOKIE AND YOU PLAY YOUR CARDS RIGHT, YOU CAN MAKE A FORTUNE IN THE SMUGGLING RACKET. AND DOC SLATER WAS, INDEED, AN EXCEPTIONALLY SMART COOKIE...



DOC SLATER *KNEW* HIS BOYS. HE KNEW THEM *VERY WELL*! HE KNEW THEY'D BEGIN TO *THINK* ABOUT THINGS DURING THE FIVE DAY OCEAN VOYAGE...



BUT HE ALSO KNEW THAT THEY'D BE *HELPLESS* TO MAKE A *MOVE*...NOT UNTIL THEY'D *DOCKED* IN NEW YORK, AT LEAST...ON THE 8TH!



THAT'S WHY THE OOC HAD SENT THE CABLEGRAM. HE'D KNOWN THE STATE OF MIND HIS BOYS WOULD BE IN BY THE TIME THEY'D REACH HIS APARTMENT...



THE APARTMENT GOT SUDDENLY STILL LIKE THE CROWD HERE AT THE PONY TRACK GETS JUST BEFORE THE PRICES FLASH UP ON THE 'TOTE' BOARDS. IN FACT, THE ONLY SOUND YOU COULD HEAR WAS THE METALLIC CLICK OF TWO RAZOR-SHARP SWITCH BLADES SNAPPING OPEN...



I AM GLAD I WAS NOT THERE TO SEE THAT KNIFE FIGHT. I MYSELF AM SQUEEMISH AT THE SIGHT OF BLOOD. BUT I AM TOLO THAT THERE WAS MUCH SPILLED THAT DAY...



LIKE I SAID! OOC WAS A SHARP COOKIE! THE CABLEGRAM WAS JUST WHAT THE OOCOR'O ORDOERO... AND THAT'S MEANT TO BE A CLEVER...



ALLIE AND BIMMY CIRCLED EACH OTHER CAUTIOUSLY, LIKE THE PHONY ACT THEM T.V. WRESTLERS PUT ON. ONLY THIS WAS NO ACT. THIS WAS FOR BIG STAKES... IF YOU WILL PARDON ANOTHER BAD PUN...



I AM TOLD THAT ALLIE AND BIMMY CUT EACH OTHER TO RIBBONS TRYING TO OPEN THE NEARLY-HEALED OPERATION SCARS I AM TOLO THAT EVEN OOC, WHO HAS A STRONG STOMACH FOR THOSE THINGS, GOT VIOLENTLY ILL WHEN HE CAME HOME...



HE'D KNOWN HOW THEY'D LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND WHAT THEY'D THINK



WHAT DO I HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE DOG FOR? IF ALLIE'S GOT THE DIAMOND, I COULD TAKE IT...



...A FEW DEFT CUTS FOR? AND I'D KNOW! AND IF BIMMY DOESN'T HAVE IT... THEN I DO. AND I DON'T HAVE TO HANG AROUND HERE! I COULD FIND MY OWN OOC!



... AND SAW THEM LYING ON HIS NICE NEW HANDLING-ROOM CARPET... SLASHED AND CUT AND PARTIALLY DISMEMBERED AND DEAD FROM LOSS OF BLOOD. BUT DOC GOT OVER IT QUICKLY. IN FACT, HE EVEN LAUGHED A LITTLE...



LIKE I SAID, DOC SLATER WAS A SMART COOKIE. HE'D WANTED A ONE-WAY SPLIT ALL FOR HIMSELF, HE HADN'T PACKED THAT NINETY-TWO CARAT ROCK INTO *EITHER* OF THE BOYS. HE'D OPERATED ON *HIMSELF* WHILE THEY WERE OUT COLD...



THAT'S RIGHT! A SMALL BLOB OF AS YET UNDISSOLVED PASTE... ALL THAT WAS LEFT OF THE PHONY NINETY-TWO CARAT DIAMOND THAT SMART COOKIE IN ANTWERP HAD TRIED TO SELL, HIM...



BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF SMART COOKIES IN THIS WORLD, WHICH IS ONE OF THE REASONS I GAVE UP THE "FENCE" BUSINESS AND TOOK UP AN HONEST PROFESSION: PARI-MUTUAL MACHINES...



... AS HE WENT INTO HIS LABORATORY AND FILLED A HYPODERMIC WITH A LOCAL ANESTHETIC SOLUTION AND INJECTED IT INTO THE FATTY TISSUE AROUND HIS OWN NEARLY-HEALED SCAR...



BECAUSE WHEN DOC OPERATED ON HIMSELF IN NEW YORK TO REMOVE THE DIAMOND, HE FOUND...



AND THAT IS ALMOST THE END OF MYSTORY. JUST ONE MORE SAD DETAIL. DOC DIED TWO WEEKS LATER! SEEMS THE PASTE USED IN THAT PHONY DIAMOND WAS POISONOUS IF IT GOT UNDER THE SKIN. WHAT'S THAT? \$200... ON MUDHOPPER... IN THE FOURTH? SUIT YOURSELF, BUDDY! THAT NAG DON'T STAND A CHANCE!



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Imagine! This big box of 21 beautiful new Christmas Cards is yours without one penny's cost to you. You won't be asked to return the cards or pay for them, now or ever. We're making this amazing offer to show you how easily you can make as much as \$75.00 and more with our exciting new Christmas Cards!

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OFFER LIMITED... ACT NOW!

Send no money. Just mail coupon for sample outfit ON APPROVAL and Feature Assortment FREE. You must be satisfied that you can make money this easy way, or you may return the samples only. THE \$1.00 FEATURE ASSORTMENT IS YOURS TO KEEP, FREE, WHETHER YOU RETURN THE SAMPLE OUTFIT OR NOT! This offer is limited, one to a family, and may never be repeated.

STUART GREETINGS, Dept. FB-117
4436 N. CLARK ST. CHICAGO 40, ILL.

I am interested in making money with your outfit of sample assortments. Rush it ON APPROVAL. Include \$1 Feature Christmas Assortment FREE, per your offer.

Name

Address

City & Zone State

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COUPON**

Mail coupon for money-making sample outfit ON APPROVAL. Get Feature Assortment as a FREE GIFT for trying our plan.

Mail Now!

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"I make \$30 to \$40 a week, in my spare time. It's easy. Your cards sell themselves!"

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STUART GREETINGS, INC.

4436 N. CLARK ST., Dept. FB-117, Chicago 40, Ill.

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**Just 2 Sales a Day
Brings You up to \$217
EXTRA a Month!**



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Now, without spending one cent, you can start a spare-time Shoe Business that brings in exciting cash profits every month! My powerful Selling Outfit makes it **easy**. Just take 2 orders a day for our fine, Nationally-Advertised shoes and you earn up to **\$217.50 extra** a month! You also get chances to win valuable free prizes.

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MASON SHOE MFG. CO.
DEPT. MA-360, CHIPPEWA FALLS, WIS.

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Because we do not sell Mason Velvet-ees shoes in stores, people must buy these TV-advertised shoes with the famed Good Housekeeping Seal **ONLY FROM YOU**... and **keep** buying from you! ✦ Right now, during our Golden Anniversary year, is the perfect time to get started. Just mail the coupon and I'll rush your money-making **FREE** Starting Outfit. The Professional Sample Outfit pictured above is sent to qualified men without a penny's cost! Send **today** and start earning exciting cash profits **RIGHT AWAY!**



RUSH FOR FREE OUTFIT!

MR. NED MASON
MASON SHOE MFG. CO., Dept. MA-360
Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

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SANDS OF MARS
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Please rush me the 3 books I have checked below, as my gift books and first selection. You will bill me only \$1 (plus few cents shipping charges) for all three, and enroll me as a member of the Science-Fiction Book Club. Every month send me the Club's free bulletin, "Things to Come," so that I may decide whether or not I wish to receive the coming monthly selection described therein. For each book I accept, I will pay only \$1 plus a few cents shipping charge. I do not have to take a book every month, only lose during each send I am a member—and I may resign at any time after accepting four selections.

- | | |
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Cadillac FEVER!

AN KIN TELL YE ALL ABOUT IT NOW. AN KIN TELL YE 'CAUSE THINGS COME OUT SO GOOD FER PA. IT WAS ALL ON ACCOUNT OF WHAT PA WANTED, AND AN REGION AN KNEW HOW BAD HE WANTED IT THAT DAY MR. EVANS CAME TO THE FARM PA RUN FER HIM. MR. EVANS CAME IN HIS NEW, SHINY RED CADILLAC. AN COULD SEE BY THE WAY PA WAS A-LOOKIN' AT IT, HIS EYES A-GLITTERIN', THAT THERE WAS NOTHIN' PA WANTED MORE IN THIS WHOLE WIDE WORLD THAN T'BE TAKIN' A RIDE IN A NEW SHINY CADILLAC...



YOU'VE BEEN DOIN' A FINE JOB HERE, WILKES... BETTER AN'Y O' MAH OTHER TENANTS. YOU COME IN FO' A GOOD SHARE OF THE CROP DOW'N MONTH. THIRTY DOLLARS, WILKES...

YES, SIR, MISTUH EVANS. THANK YE, SIR!

WHEN MR. EVANS DROVE OFF, PA JUST STOOD THERE WATCHIN' THAT HUNK OF MACHINERY LIKE A STARVIN' MAN STARRIN' AT A POT O' STEAMIN' HOT JOYFULS.

LOOK AT 'ER GO, RUTHIE! SEE HOW SHE TAKES THEM ROTS WITH SCARCEN A BOUNCE. SOMETIMES AN DON'T THINK AN'LL EVER HIT T' RIDE IN ONE...

NOW DON'T YE FRET, PA. YE DO GIT THIRTY DOLLARS. I'N YOU SAVE A DOLLAR EV'RY MONTH...



SHHH! YE KNOW YOUNG MAH, RUTHIE. IF 'N SHE KNOWS HOW MESSY MISTUH EVANS PAID ME, SHE'LL WANT IT ALL!

YOU HIDE A DOLLAR, PA! YOU HIDE IT SO'S MA CAN'T LAY HER HANDS ON IT. YOU SAVE FO' THAT RIDE...



AN' JIM? WELL THEN! HE GOT A QUARTER HORN T' RIDE IN A CADILLAC! WELL, BE IN RUTHIE AIN'T GONNA DO WITH-OUT JIM! 'CAUSE HE AN THOW HON FIFTEEN DOLLARS T' RENT ONE!

AN' DON' WIND DOWN! WITHOUT, MA...

HE STOLE MARK MONIST FROM THE CHURCH IN THE BARONAGE HOUSE. DIDN'T YE, EFFIE MARY?

MY HUSBAND I'VE GOT A SACK FROM MRS. PRUITT FOR A DRESS FOR ME! Y'AIN'T GOIN' TO RUDE ME A NEW DRESS?

BUT PA'D OVEF HIS MAD RIGHT QUICK AND I'D BE
RIGH' THE WULE. WASHIN' THE TRACED AUCHON WITH HIS AND
HE'D BE TALKIN' 'BOUT HOW SORRY HE WAS FER ME...

POOR EFF SHE GOT A-HANKERIN'
FER THINGS LIKE THE WIMMER
IN TOWN GOT, AND SHE CAINT
HELP SWIPIN' MAN WIDNET.

WHY'S IT SO
SPECIAL
IMPORTANT
FER YE T' RIDE
IN A CIGLAC, FRY
THEY'S WHAT AN
CAINT FERRER?



FUNNY RUTHIE, BUT THE'S SOMETHIN'
AN DON'T UNDERSTAN' MYSELF. AN
DON'T KNOW WHEN AN STARTED
WANTIN' IT. ALL AN DO KNOW IS...
AN WANT THEY RIDE SO BAD AN KIN
TASTE IT!

AND AN
FEEL BAD
FER YE, PA.
AN LONG YE
AN AN WANT
FER YE T' HAVE
EVERYTHIN' YE
WANT!



THEN WE'D GET I' THE AUCTION AND PA'D BE FAYIN' HARDLY NO
HEED I' THE SON'S ON. HE'D BE A-LOOKIN' AT JES WYLER'S HIS
BLACK CIGLAC...

...THE WAY SHE SETS THERE,
A-STANDIN' STILL, BUT LOOKIN'
LIKE SHE'S BOVIN' ALL THE SAME!

JES WYLER'S RIGH,
PA... AND YE AIN'T...



POOR PA. AN GUESS AN'L NEVER WANT ANY-
THIN' AS MUCH AS HE DID...

JES ONE RIDE, RUTHIE! THE'S
ALL AN WANT. THEN AN COULD
DO BACK AN' WORK AN' WORK
AN' NEVER MIND A WYL. AN DON'
NEED AN' AN' ASIN' FER TOO
BROOD, AN AN, RUTHIE?

HO, PA!
YE GOT
THEY
WASH
COMIN'!



IF IT HADN'T A-BEEN THEAT AN LOVED
PA SO, AN NEVER WOULD'VE GARED
BIM OVEF TO JES WYLER LIKE AN
DID. HE JUST GOOGLED AT ME LIKE
AN WAS A CRAZY OL' JAYBIRD...

PA WON'T BURT TOAM CIGLAC
NONE, MR. WYLER, AN' HE CAN
DRIVE 4000, TOO! HE DRIV
THE FLUYER FER A LONG TIME
TILL SHE GIVE OUT!



JES WYLER... HIM IN THEM FANCY
CLOTHES... HE NEVER SAID NOTHIN'
HE JUST LAUGHED...

TOAM A STAFFY
MEAN MR. WYLER.
LAUGH! SO ON
LADEN! AN HOP
YE FACE FALLS
OFF!

DON'T PUT HER
NO TENTION.
MR WYLER! SHE
DON' MEAN
NOTHIN'.



PA CRACKED ME AWAY AN' AFTER
THE AUCTION, WE DRIV HOME...

AN'M BLAD I
TRIED T' GET YE
THEY RIDE, PA...
AN I'LL KEEP
ON TRYIN'...

IF WASH YE OUT
TO BE A JERONY
FOOL, RUTHIE!
AN' IT'S ALL
YOUAR MA'S
FAULT! ORAT
HERY!



PA'S FACE GOT REAL DARK AND GRIM AS HE SPOKE...

SHE BETTER KEEP HER HANDS OFF MAH BAYON? THAT'S ALL AN GOT T' SAY! SHE JUS BETTER!

AN THOUGHT PA WAS MAD 'NUFF T' SHUT MA WHEN WE GOT BACK T' THE FARM. MESSIN' THEN MA WOULD QUIT TAKIN' HIS MONEY. BUT HE JUST SHIMMERED AND LOOKED SAD...

AT LEAST AN GOT SOMETHIN' T' SHOW FOR THE MONEY. IF'M HE HAD FOGAN WAY, HE'D SPEND FIFTEEN DOLLARS MENTIN' A CADILLAC, AN IT'D BE OVER AN' DONE IN ONE DAY!

AN'D NEVER FORGET T' CRY...

AN' AN AIN'T GOIN' T' SWE' YE THAT CHANCE, OLDEST AN AIN'T AHEAD! JOIN' T' LET YE THROW NO MONEY AWAY ON FOOLISHNESS WHEN THERE'S SO MUCH AN NEEDS!

AN'LL SPEND MAH MONEY THE WAY AN DES' FITEEN! AN' HE KEEP FOGAN PAWS OFF'N ITT' HEART!



WHEN PA GOT T' FEELIN' LOW, AN'D ASK HIM T' TAKE ME HUNTING, WE ONLY HAD ONE SHOTGUN TWIXEN US, BUT PA'D DO MOST OF THE SHOOTIN'. HE'D BRING DOWN A 'COON OR 'FOSSUM AND HE'D SELL AN FURST THING...

YE GOT 'EM, PA! AN OD BELIEVE THERE AIN'T NO BETTER SHOT IN THE WHOLE COUNTRY!



BUT WHEN HE WASN'T SHOOTIN', HE'D GIT T' THINKIN'... THINKIN' 'BOUT MA AND HIS MONEY AND THE CADILLAC RIDE HE COULDN'T GET... AND HE'D LOOK SO UNHAPPY IT LIKE T' SHORE MY HEART...

DON'T WORRY, PA! SOME DAY YE'LL BE RICH! THEN WE'DE SCALL GIT EVERYTHIN' YOU WANT!

NO, NUTHE! I'LL NEVER BE RICH. AN I'S WANT ONE THING... THAT RIDE!



THEN, SUDDENLIKE, HIS JAW'D CLAMP TIGHT AS A WEASEL TRAP AND HE'D JES BLAST AWAY AT BOTHIN' WITH THE SHOTGUN... LIKE MESSIN' MA WAS SOMEWHERE OUT THERE IN FRONT O' HIM...



AN' THEN THE TIME AN FELT SADDEST WAS WHEN PA AN' ME WAS IN TOWN ONE DAY AN' WE WAS PASSIN' THE AUTO MENTIN' PLACE. PA JUST STOOD THERE LOOKIN' AT THE CADILLAC IN THE WINDOW, AN' FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, AN SEEN MY PA CRYIN'...



AN DON'T RECKON I'LL GIT T' RIDE IN ONE O' THEM... CHUCK... NEVER...

AN GOT ALL KNOTTED AND SHAKIN' INSIDE AN' I TOOK PA'S HAND AND LED 'IM AWAY FROM THE WINDOW AND MADE OUT LIKE AN DIDN'T SEE 'IM CRYIN'.



WE'D BEST BE GOIN' PA, IF 'N YOUNG BOY T'BUT THEN NEEDS FOR PLANTIN'.

RUTHIE, AN DON'T KNOW NOW AN'M GOIN' MAKE YOUNG MA STOP STEALIN' MAH SAVIN'S... BUT AN WILL! SO HELP ME, AN'LL STOP 'EM!

WELL, ONE DAY THE LID BLOWED OFF. MA'D STOLE THE LAST MONEY SHE'D EVER STEAL FROM PA 'CAUSE SHE LAID THERE BY THE COOKSTOVE WITH A HOLE IN HER AS BIG AS YOUNG FIST AND PA'S HAND-SEWED DOLLAR STULL IN HER HAND.



AN RODE INTO TOWN T'SHERIFF HED A-STOPPED OFFICE.

SHERIFF HOYT ASKED ME LOTS O' QUESTIONS AS WE RODE BACK HOME.

ME AN' SHERIFF HOYT FOUND PA A-SITTIN' AND A-STARRIN' AT MA. AND HE WAS JES' AS WHITE AS SHE WAS ONLY SHE WAS EMPTY O' BLOOD.



NO, SUE, AN DIDN'T GO FOR NO DOCTOR, SHERIFF, AN COULD SEE MA WAS DEAD AS SHE'S EVER A-GOIN' T' BE?

ALL RIGHT, RUTHIE, LET'S GO BACK T'THE FIRM.



YE DIDN'T SEE YOUNG PA JESSIN' WITH YOUNG MA, DID YE, RUTHIE?

NO, BUT THEY WAS ALWAYS ARGUIN'. PA'D SAVE A L'L MONEY AND MA'D SPEND IT AND HE'D GET POWERFUL MAD THIS MORNIN' HE SPOKE HED KILL HER!



YE'D BEST BE COMIN' WITH ME, CLAYDE WILKES?

THE NEXT TIME AN SAW PA WAS WHEN THEY BRUNG HIM UP FO' TRIAL. AN WAS SITTIN' IN A NICE CHAIR NEXT T' JUDGE SAYS AN' SOMEONE WAS ASKIN' ME QUESTIONS.



NOW, RUTHIE, TELL THE COURT EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED?

DON'T BE AFRAID, RUTHIE, NOBODY CAN HURT YOU!

YES, SUE...

SO AN TEL' MAH STORY...



AN SEEN PA BUST INTO THE HOUSE. HE WAS STEALIN' MAD, HE GUSSED MA... POINTED THE SHOTGUN AT HER... AN PULLED THE TRIGGER. PA KILLED MA!

RUTHIE?

PA JUMPED UP, SCREAMIN' AT ME...
TEARS A-RUNNIN' DOWN HIS FACE...



OUTTIL, WHY'D YOU TELL 'EM THEY DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DOIN'?

PA! AH HAD TO! PA! AH HAD TO!

I FELT SICK THE WAY PA CARRIED ON, BUT IT WAS OVER SOON... WHEN THEM TWELVE GENTS WENT OUT AND CAME BACK AND ONE OF 'EM SAID...



WE, THE JURY, FIND THE DEFENDANT GUILTY AS CHARGED...

AN' AH FELT SICKER THE NIGHT THEY BURNED UP PA IN THE ELECTRICAL CHAIR...



THE NEXT MORNIN', SHERIFF HOYT CAME BY T' PICK ME UP AN' TAKE ME UP TO THE CEMETERY... THEY WAS GOIN' T' BURY PA...



POOR KID? CHORE... YOU'RE ALL ALONE, NOW...

WHERE'S PA? WHEN THEY BURNIN' HIM?

AN' THEN AH HEARD IT... THE HUM OF THE ENGINE... COMIN' DOWN THE ROAD... COMIN' FROM THE STATE PRISON. BRINKIN' PA... AN' THEN AH SAW IT... AND AH WAS GLAD PA WAS FINALLY GETTIN' HIS RIDE IN A CADILLAC... A CADILLAC HEARSE...



AFTER THEY BURIED PA, AH WENT OVER T' SHERIFF HOYT...



YOU BETTER TAKE ME INTO TOWN, SHERIFF! AH GOT SOMETHIN' T' SAY...

T'SEE, AH KNEW ABOUT THAT CADILLAC HEARSE THEY GOT UP AT THE STATE PRISON. THAT'S WHY AH BLOWED THEY HOLE IN ME WITH THE SHOTGUN AND AS A FIST AND BLAMED IT ON PA. I KNEW IT WAS THE ONLY WAY HE'D EVER GET THAT RIDE.



AN' NOW THEY ARE COMIN' FOR ME AN' I'LL BE FOLLOWIN' PA SHORTLY, FUMIN' THINKE AH'N LOOKIN' FORWARD TO IT! AN' SHERIFF HOYT CADILLAC HEARSE.



The TRAP

THERE WAS SOMETHING THAT BLANKETED EVERYTHING THAT GRIZZLY MORNING... A GREY CAST TO MATT'S TASTELESS COFFEE... A GREY DRIMNESS COATING THE KITCHEN WALLS... A GREYNESS THAT SEEMED TO CLOSE IN ON HIM SO THAT HE EVEN FELT GREY INSIDE HIMSELF. MATT HALL HAD THE TRAPPED HOPELESS AIR OF A CRIMINAL ON THE WITNESS STAND WHOSE ALIBI HAD JUST BEEN BROKEN. YET, MATT WAS NO CRIMINAL... EXCEPT, PERHAPS, IN THE JAUNICED EYES OF HIS WIFE, HIS COLO-RELENTLESS PROSECUTOR...

GRAY! SO YOU DESERVE MORE BUT OF LIFE THAN THIS MISERABLE SHACK AND THIS CRUMMY NEIGHBORHOOD. WE'VE ONLY BEEN HERE A MONTH. BUSINESS WILL PICK UP, HENRY! YOU'LL SEE! WE'LL BE ON TOP OF THE HEAP AGAIN, LIKE WE USED TO...

WHAT DO YOU MEAN, A MONTH? FOR THREE YEARS NOW... THREE YEARS, MATT... WE'VE BEEN GOING FROM BAD TO WORSE. OUR NEXT MOVE WILL BE OUT ON THE STREET!



IRVINE HALL SLIPPED INTO HER SEAT AT THE KITCHEN TABLE AND THE COOL METALLIC GUNK OF HER SPOON IN THE TUGAN BOWL MATCHED THE ICE STEEL OF HER EYES...

WE COULD MOVE TO A BETTER PLACE, IRVINE! I'VE OFFERED TO CASH IN MY LIFE-INSURANCE POLICY. WE GOT ABOUT THIRTY-~~SIX~~ HUNDRED SPOCKED INTO THAT...



THAT POLICY IS ALL THE SECURITY I'VE GOT IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO YOU, AND I'VE GIVEN IT A LOT OF PRODDING, MATT. SOMETHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU!

DON'T, DON'T TALK LIKE THAT, IRVINE! I DON'T LIKE IT!



A CONTENTIOUS SMILE HARDENED
HERE'S NORMALLY ATTRACTIVE FACE.

YOU'RE STUPID, MATT! HAVE
YOU EVER THOUGHT OF COL-
LECTING ALL THE DISBUR-
SANCE MONEY NOW...
WHILE YOU'RE ALIVE?
THE WHOLE TWENTY
GRAND...!

YOU'RE
TALK-
ING
CRAZY,
HERE!

AM IF WE'LL SEE?
I'VE BEEN THINKING A
LOT ABOUT IT THE LAST
FEW WEEKS, AND I'VE
BEEN DOING SOMETHING.
FOOD? WE GOT IT JUST
ABOUT ALL ARRANGED!

"WE?"
WHO'S
"WE?"

MR. GROWER AND ME? HE'S THE
UNDERTAKER! YOU'VE PASSED
HIS PLACE... GROWER'S FUNERAL
HOME... TWO BLOCKS DOWN... ON
THE CORNER, I'VE BEEN DISCUS-
SING IT WITH HIM. HE'S COMING
OVER THIS MORNING TO TALK
TO US ABOUT IT.



THE GREYNESS OF THE DAY TURNED EVEN GREYER
WHEN MR. GROWER ARRIVED. HE QUICKLY EXPLAINED
HIS PLAN TO MATT...

SO FAR, IT SOUNDS
PRETTY GOOD, MR.
GROWER BUT WHAT
ABOUT THE POLICE?

I'VE LIVED IN THIS TOWN
ALL MY LIFE, HALL. I KNOW
CHIEF BOLAN. HE'LL TAKE
A QUICK LOOK AT WHAT
APPEARS TO BE A STAR
IN THE HEART. HE'LL SEE
THE BLOOD-STAINED
KNIFE... AND...



...AND MR. GROWER WILL
MAKE SURE HE'S THERE
TO SAY YOU'RE DEAD!
DON'T YOU SEE, MATT?
CHIEF BOLAN WILL TAKE
MR. GROWER'S WORD
FOR IT, AND...

WHAT DO
YOU GET
OUT OF THIS,
MR. GROWER?

TWENTY-
FIVE
PERCENT!
FIVE
GRAND!
THAT'S NOT
BAD MUCH
CONSIDERING
MY RISK...



GRAY, GROWER!
YOU GOT YOURSELF
A DEAL?

GOOD! NOW THE FIRST THING
YOU HAVE TO DO IS CHANGE
YOUR APPEARANCE! YOU'RE
NOT WELL-KNOWN HERE, SO
IF YOU GROW A Moustache
AND BEGAN WEARING MORN-
ING-GLOVED GLASSES, AND PEOPLE
NOT TO KNOW YOU THAT WAY.



WHEN THIS WHOLE THING IS
OVER, YOU COULD DROP THE
DISGUISE... LOOK LIKE THE REAL
YOU AGAIN... AND NO ONE
WOULD BE THE WISER!

YOU SURE
NOT
EVERY-
THING
FIGURED
OUT,
GROWER?

I
TOLD
YOU,
MATT!



AND SO, DURING THE NEXT THREE WEEKS, MATT HALL CULTIVATED A MOUTHCANE, STICKING IN DOGBOYS SO NO ONE WOULD SEE HIM. AT THE END OF THAT TIME, HE'D BEGUN TO CIRCULATE FREELY AND HIS THROATLESS GLASSES AND HEAVY BLACK MOUTHCANE BECAME FAMILIAR TO HIS NEW NEIGHBORS...

EVENH, MRS. GOOD EVENING, MR. BRADY...
HALL...



MEANWHILE HE'D BEEN GETTING CONSTANT INSTRUCTION FROM MR. GROVER...

THE MEMBERS *SHALL* *LOW* *BREATHING*, MATT! TAKE *ONE DEEP BREATH* WHILE ANYONE IS *LOOK-ING*, AND THE WHOLE *DEAL IS WRECKED!*

I'LL REMEM-BER, LARRY!



LARRY SHOWS HIS CALM CONFIDENT MANNER STEADFAST MATT FOR THE COUNCIL, AND WHEN THE NIGHT FINALLY ARRIVED, MATT WAS WELL-PREPARED. FIRST, THE MORTICIAN SOFTLY MANIPULATED A WOUND OVER THE HEART OF THE "MURDERED-MAN-TO-BE..."

LARRY IT LOOKS SO... REAL...

I'VE HAD PLENTY OF EXPERIENCE REPAIRING WOUNDS LIKE THIS! I'LL GUAR-TEE TO BE ABLE TO REVERSE THE PROCESS.



THEN THE MORTICIAN APPLIED A "DEATH FALLOUT" TO MATT'S BODY AND FACE...

I'LL DO MY BEST TO FIX IT SO YOU WON'T HAVE TO LIE THERE TOO LONG!
THO...LARRY!



AND AN HOUR LATER, SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT, MATT HALL STRETCHED HIMSELF OUT ON THE WEEDY PATCH OF LAWN OUTSIDE HIS HOME. MR. GROVER POURED A STICKY RED LIQUID OVER THE HOLE SENT THROUGH HIS JACKET AND ON THE GRASS AROUND HIM...

REAL BLOOD? WHERE'D YOU GET IT?

WHERE DO YOU THINK I GOT IT? I'M AN UNDER-TAKER!



THEN THE MORTICIAN KNELT BESIDE MATT AND SPOKE IN HIS USUAL CONFIDENT MANNER...

GIVE ME A MINUTE OR SO TO GET AWAY, THEN TAKE THE *KNIFE*, SNEAK IT IN THE *BLOOD*, AND TOSS IT IN THE *ROAD*. NEXT, PITCH YOUR *EMPTY WALLET* IN THE *GRASS*! *THAT'S* ALL TAKE OVER FROM THERE.



A FEW MOMENTS LATER, MRS. HALL STEPPED OUTSIDE. SHE STOOD OVER HER HUSBAND, STARED DOWN AT THE GRUESOME SCENE, THEN SCREAMED...



HER SHRIIL SCREAM RINGS ALONG THE DARK, QUIET HOMES THAT LINE THE STREET. HERE AND THERE, A LIGHT BLINKS ON. INHER SCREAMS AGAIN. PEOPLE SLID IN NIGHTCLOTHES POUNED FROM THE BLACKNESS.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

WHAT HAPPENED?

POLICE! CALL THE POLICE! MY HUSBAND! HE... SOB... HE'S BEEN STABBED.



UNDERTAKER LARRY DROWER ARRIVED AT THE SCENE ALONG WITH CHIEF NED MCLAIN AND A SLEEPY-EYED POLICEMAN...

YOU SURE HE'S DEAD, BROWER?

THERE'S A BRILLIANT QUESTION FOR AN UNDERTAKER! LOOK, MCLAIN... WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM LIE THERE! GET SOMETHING TO COVER HIM UP...



AS THE POLICEMAN MOVED TOWARD THE PATROL CAR TO GET A BLANKET.

HEY! LOOK AT THIS! A KNIFE IN THE ROAD. IT'S GOT BLOOD ON IT!

DON'T TOUCH THAT MISTER!



THE OFFICER PICKED UP THE EVIDENCE WITH A HANDKERCHIEF AND PROUDLY PRESENTED IT TO CHIEF MCLAIN...

GOOD WORK, FLOYD. TAKE IT EASY, MCLAIN, SHE'S HAD A BAD SHOCK... LOOKS LIKE THIS IS THE MURDER WEAPON, BROWER. NOW TO QUESTION HIS WIFE!



LEERE PUT ON A STERLING PERFORMANCE AS A GRIEVING WIDOW...

NOT SOB... NO! MATT DIDN'T HAVE AN ENEMY IN THE WORLD, OH, MATT... SOB... MATT...

IT WAS A MURDER, MCLAIN, YOU'VE HAD ENOUGH OF THEM LATELY TO KNOW THAT! SOMETHING OUGHT TO BE DONE ABOUT THEM, FOO!



LAY OFF, BROWER! I'M DOING MY BEST. IT'S JUST...

MEAN! I'M AN UNDER-TAKER. MY PLACE IS JUST A COUPLE OF BLOCKS DOWN. IF YOU'D LIKE, I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOUR POOR HUSBAND'S BURIALING!

THANK SOB... THANK YOU



A MOMENT LATER, SOMEONE FOUND MATT'S EMPTY WALLET...

YES... HE'D COME TO THE BANK THIS AFTERNOON. HE HAD THE BEST MONEY, SOB... WITH HIM...

WELL, THAT CLIMAXES IT, BROWER. IT'S A MURDERING ALL RIGHT! AND I'LL GET THE MURDERING THEY IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!



THE NEXT MORNING, MRS. VINCENT, THE HALLS' PLUMP AND KINDLY NEIGHBOR, ACCOMPANIED IRENE HALL TO THE GROWER FUNERAL PARLOR. IT WAS ALL PART OF THE PLAN. SHE STOOD BESIDE THE DOORING WIDOW AS THEY VIEWED MATT'S STUFF WHITE ROSE. . .

POOR GIRL! SUCH A TRAGEDY! TIME IS A GREAT HEALER, MRS. VINCENT! WE CAN ONLY WAIT AND COMFORT HER IN HER HOUR OF MOURNING. . .



MR. GROWER CLOSED THE COFFIN AND WHEELED IT OUT. IRENE TURNED TO MRS. VINCENT. . .

I'M, I'M ALL RIGHT NOW, MRS. VINCENT! YOU DON'T HAVE TO SEE THIS! YOU'VE BEEN MORE THAN KIND. . .



AND SO, IRENE CRIED AND MR. GROWER UTTERED FOND WORDS, AND MRS. VINCENT LOOKED ON WITH MORRIS FIDELIZATION AS THE EMPTY COFFIN WAS ROLLED THROUGH THE YAWNING FURNACE DOOR IN THE HUGE BRICK WALL. . .



I HAD LOOKED UP WITH TEAR FILLED EYES. . .

MATT ALWAYS SAID HE. . . I HAVE A GREGARIOUS WANTED TO. . . SON. . . TO BE IN THE HEAR, MRS. HALL. GREGARIOUS. CAN YOU. . .? WOULD YOU FOLLOW ME. . .



MRS. VINCENT HAD REACTED JUST AS THEY'D PLANNED. . . BUT IRENE'S HESITATION HAD GIVEN MATT ENOUGH TIME TO LEAP FROM THE COFFIN AS IT WAS ROLLED DOWN THE LONG HALL TO THE GREGARIOUS. . .

OH, MRS. VINCENT! YOU'RE SO KIND! THINK NOTHING OF IT! WHAT'S A NEIGHBOR FOR! GREGARIOUS! MR. GROWER WENT THIS WAY. . .



AND AFTERWARDS, THE THREE CONSPIRATORS HAD A HEARTY LAUGH. . .

YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN MRS. VINCENT'S FACE! I WATCHED FROM BEHIND THAT CURTAIN. . . A GREAT HIT OF ACTING ALL THOUSAND AROUND, IT WAS! A FRONT-THOUSAND DOLLAR PERFORMANCE!



THEN MATT TURNED TO HIS WIFE AND THEIR ACCOMPLICE...

MOM WHAT? NOW YOU GET OUT OF THIS COUNTRY AND LAY LOW IN MEXICO OR SOUTH AMERICA. I'M HERE WILL JOIN YOU IN A YEAR OR SO WHEN ALL THIS HAS BLOWN OVER AND THE INSURANCE COMPANY WILL PAID OFF.

A YEAR?? I DON'T WANT TO BE AWAY FROM YOU FOR THAT LONG, HONEY!

MATT, YOU'RE NOT GOING TO RISK SPENDING EVERYTHING I DO AS MR. HOOVER SAYS THERE OF THE MONEY WE'LL HAVE WHEN I JOIN YOU!

WHAT ABOUT DONALD? I CAN'T GO ANYWHERE WITHOUT DOUGH!

I THOUGHT OF THAT! I'LL ADVANCE YOU TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND, MATT! I'M HERE CAN PAY ME BACK! YOU CAN LIVE WELL FOR A YEAR OR THAT IN SOUTH AMERICA! HERE...

MATT SMILED WILLY, TOOK THE MONEY, AND STARTED FOR THE DOOR...

WELL, WHY NOT? I CAN SEE A LONG VACATION! STONE, HONEY.

MOM! IF, MATT! YOU'D BETTER SHAVE OFF THAT Moustache OR WE'LL ALL HAVE A LONG VACATION IN A PENITENTIARY!

MATT HALL WENT TO NEW YORK, ARRANGED FOR A PASSPORT UNDER AN ASSURED NAME, AND BOARDED A SHIP BOUND FOR ARGENTINA...

THOMPSON? RICHARD THOMPSON?

YES, SIR? CABIN 43? THAT'S FORWARD ON DECK A, SIR...

A YEAR PASSED AND MATT WRITES IN RIO FOR IRENE, BUT IRENE DIDN'T COME. HE WROTE, BUT SHE DID NOT ANSWER. FINALLY, AFTER EIGHTEEN MONTHS, HE FLEW HOME...

TO BLAZES WITH THE RIGHT SOME-THING'S HAPPENED TO HER. I KNOW IT!

FELLOW, MR. THOMPSON?

THE HOUSE HAD CHANGED. IT WAS ALL FIXED UP. THE LAWN WAS LUSH AND GREEN WITH EXPENSIVE SHRUBS. MATT RANG THE BELL...

SHE'S SURE BEEN SPENDING THE DOLLAR!

IRENE BLANCHED WHEN SHE SAW MATT. WHEN HE STEPPED FORWARD TO PUT HIS ARMS AROUND HER, SHE FOUGHT HIM OFF.

IRENE? MY LORD! HAVE I CHANGED THAT MUCH? IT'S NOT MATT YOUR HUSBAND!

MR. WHAT? LISTEN, MISTER, YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE! YOU'VE GOT ME CONFUSED WITH SOMEONE ELSE!

SHE BACKED OFF AS MATT STARED AT HER.

OUT OUT THE CONED, IRENE! WHAT'S GOIN' ON?

IRENE? WHO IS THAT MAN? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH MY WIFE, SIR?



MATT STARED AT LARRY GROVER AND A CHILL CREEPT UP HIS SPINE. THE REALIZATION DAWNED UPON HIM SLOWLY...

YOUR... YOUR WIFE? WHY YOU DIRT DOUBLE-CROSSING... SO THAT'S HOW IT WAS! YOU TWO PLANNED IT THIS WHOLE SHOPPING ME OFF WHILE YOU LIVED IT UP ON MY INSURANCE! OUGH! WELL, I GOT FIFTEEN GRAND COMIN' TO ME AND I WANT IT!



GET OUT OF MY HOUSE BEFORE I CALL THE POLICE, MISTER!

DON'T KID ME, GROVER. YOU WOULDN'T DARE! IF I SPILL THE BEANS, YOU'LL GO UP THE RIVER WITH ME. YOU CAN HAVE IRENE! JUST HAND OVER FIFTEEN GRAND... NOW...



LARRY GROVER PICKED UP THE PHONE...

GIVE ME THE POLICE!

YOU CAN'T BLUFF ME, GROVER! I'M STAYING! IT'S YOUR FUNERAL TOO, YOU KNOW!



CHIEF MELVIN GOT TO THE HOUSE IN A HURRY AND LISTENED TO MATT'S STORY...

...SO THE WHOLE DEAL WAS A PRANK. I WAS NEVER KILLED...

I ALWAYS LIKE TO LAY MY HANDS ON YOU GON MEN, BUT THIS TIME, YOU TRIED TO SHAKE DOWN THE WRONG CUSTOMER, MISTER. I SAW MATT HALL'S BODY MYSELF! TAKE HIM DOWNTOWN, FLOYD...



THEY BOOKED MATT, "MISSED" HIM, FINGERPRINTED HIM, AND SLAPPED HIM IN A CELL AS HE SCREAMED IN PROTEST.

CHECK MY FINGER-PRINTS! YOU'LL SEE IF I'M NOT MATT HALL!

FINGERPRINTS? THAT'S IT, CHIEF! I THOUGHT THEY LOOKED FAMILIAR...



THE JALMO MAN'S PRINTS WERE MATCHED WITH THOSE TAKEN FROM A BLOODY KNIFE FOUND IN THE ROAD NEAR THE SCENE OF MATT HALL'S "MURDER" ALMOST TWO YEARS BEFORE...

THEY MATCH? NO DOUBT ABOUT IT! WE'VE GOT MATT HALL'S KILLER!



MATT HALL FELT AS THOUGH HE WERE LIVING THROUGH A NIGHTMARE FROM THAT MOMENT ON, HE WAS PUT ON TRIAL...

...AND I WILL NOT ONLY SHOW THAT THIS MAN...THIS RICHARD THOMPSON...MURDERED MATT HALL, BUT THAT HE RETURNED TO EXTORT MONEY FROM HIS VICTIM'S WIDOW...



MRS. IRENE HALL BROWER TESTIFIED...

MATT HALL? HIM? HOW COULD HE BE? MATT HALL IS DEAD! CREATED!



MATT HALL PLEADED...

NAKE BROWER TELL YOU THE FACTS? MAKE HIM TELL YOU THE COFFIN WAS EMPTY?

THE PROSECUTOR WILL MAKE HIM REPEAT FROM FURTHER OUTRAGED.



MRS. VINCENT TESTIFIED...

I SAW THE BODY IN THE COFFIN. I SAW THE COFFIN SLID INTO THE FURNACE. IF THAT MAN IS MATT HALL, I'M GRATEFUL!

YOUR WITNESS.



MATT HALL'S LAWYER COULD GET NOTHING WITH MRS. VINCENT...

SURE HE LOOKS LIKE MATT HALL WHEN YOU PUT THAT Moustache AND GLASSES ON HIM, WHO WOULDN'T? BUT IT'S NOT HIM!

MRS. VINCENT? ARE YOU SURE? YOU ALSO - LATELY SIGHT?



GRIFF WILSON'S TESTIMONY CLINCHED THE CASE, AND AFTER ONLY 35 MINUTES, THE JURY RETURNED A VERDICT OF...

...GUILTY!



THERE WAS A GREYNESS THAT BLANKETED EVERYTHING THAT DRIEDLY MORNING... A GREY CAST TO THE PRISON WALLS... A GREYNESS TO THE SCARFOLD THAT'S BUILT... A GREYNESS THAT SEEMED TO CLOSE IN ON MATT SO THAT HE EVEN FELT GREY INSIDE HIMSELF AS THEY SLID THE ROPE AROUND HIS NECK AND SPRUNG THE TRAP...



...AND HUNG HIM FOR HIS OWN MURDER!

THE END

A SPECIAL EDITORIAL

THIS IS AN APPEAL FOR ACTION!

THE PROBLEM. Comics are under fire — horror and crime comics in particular. Due to the efforts of various do-gooders and "do gooder" groups, a large segment of the public is being led to believe that certain comic magazines cause juvenile delinquency, warp the minds of America's youth, and affect the development of the personalities of those who read them! Among these do-gooders are a psychiatrist who has made a lucrative career of attacking comic magazines, certain publishing companies who do not publish comics and who would benefit by their demise, many groups of adults who would like to blame their lack of ability as responsible parents on comic mags instead of on themselves, and various assorted headline hunters. These people are malignant. They complain to local police officials, to local magazine retailers, to local wholesalers, and to their congressmen. They complain and complain and threaten and threaten. Eventually, everyone gets frightened. The newsdealer gets frightened. He removes the books from display. The wholesaler gets frightened. He refuses shipments. The congressmen get frightened. "November is coming!" They seek an investigation. This wave of hysteria has seriously threatened the very existence of the whole comic magazine industry.

WE BELIEVE: Your editors sincerely believe that the claim of these crusaders . . . that comics are bad for children . . . is nonsense. If we, in the slightest way, thought that horror comics, crime comics, or any other kind of comics were harmful to our readers, we would cease publishing them and direct our efforts toward something else!

And we're not alone in our belief. For example, Dr. David Abrahamson, eminent criminologist, in his book, "Who Are The Guilty?" says, "Comic books do not lead to crime, although they have been widely blamed for it. . . . In my experience as a psychiatrist, I cannot remember having seen one boy or girl who has committed a crime, or who became neurotic or psychotic . . . because he or she read comic books." A group led by Dr. Freda Klein, Mental Health Chairman of the III Congress of the P. T. A., decided that living room violence has "a juvenile delinquent effect on young minds." Dr. Robert H. Felix, director of the National Institute of Mental Health, said that horror comic books do not organize criminal behavior in children. . . . in a way, the horror comics may do some good. . . . Children may use fantasy, as stimulated by the "comics" as a means of working out natural feelings of aggression.

We also believe that a large portion of our usual readership of horror and crime comics is made up of adults. We believe that those who oppose comics are a small minority. Yet this minority is causing the hysteria. The voice of the majority . . . you who buy comics, read them, enjoy them, and are not harmed by them . . . has not been heard!

WHAT YOU MUST DO. Unless you act now, the pressure from this minority may force comics from the American scene. It is members of this minority who threaten the local retailers, who threaten the local wholesalers, who have sent letters to the Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency (now investigating the comic industry).

IT IS TIME THAT THE MAJORITY'S VOICE BE HEARD!

It is time that the Senate Subcommittee hear from **YOU** — each and every one of you!

If you agree that comics are harmless entertainment, write a letter or a postcard **TODAY** — or

The Senate Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency
United States Senate
Washington 25, D.C.

and in your own words, tell them so. Make it a nice, polite letter! In the case of you younger readers, it would be more effective if you could get your parents to write for you, or perhaps add a P.S. to your letter, as the Senate Subcommittee may not have much respect for the opinions of minors.

Of course, if you or your parents disagree with us, and believe that comics **ARE** bad, let your sentiments be known on that too! The important thing is that the Subcommittee hear from actual comic book readers and/or their parents, rather than from people who never read a comic magazine in their lives, but simply want to destroy them.

It is also important that your local newsdealer be encouraged to continue carrying, displaying, and selling all kinds of comics. Speak to him. Have him speak to his wholesaler.

Wherever you can, let your voice and the voices of your parents be heard in protest over the campaign against comics.

But first . . . right now . . . please write that letter to the Senate Subcommittee.

Sincerely,
Your grateful editors
(for the whole E. C. Gang)

SLOB!

"It's too much work for one man," old Setona said, his lower lip trembling. "One man ain't got enough time to take care all these senese's' complaints!"

"Shut up!" Mr. Hemden screeched, a dangerous throb on his throat. "Take me to the basement so I can see for myself how you're neglecting my building! . . . no doors open without squeaking . . . no water comes through pipes you've allowed to rust! You're nothing but a . . . a SLOW!"

Old Sikora blanched, his skin drawn tight. "I don't have to take that from no one," he answered daskly. "Slob!" answered Mr. Herndon, as the elevator descended amidst groans and shrimps. "Slob! SLOB! SLOB! SLOB! SLOB!"

Old Sikora sucked air into his scrawny gullet and lunged forward. But his fingers were less than half-way to his employer's throat when Mr. Herndon struck. His big fists hammered relentlessly, against ancient skin and brittle bone. Sikora had sagged to the floor, his face a blob of butchered meat, his head hanging limply on a neck which wasn't quite straight. He was dead.

Mr. Herndon carefully opened the furnace, heaved the old man's body into the dark cavern, threw several bushfulls of flaming matches inside, and slammed the door shut.

That same night a delegation of senators arrived at Mr. Henderson's home . . . together with their menacing policemen. "You're under arrest for the murder of old Slocum," the oldest officer intoned.

"The body?" Mr. Herndon inquired scornfully. "You found a body? Unless you have one there isn't a shred of evidence that..."

"We got a body, pal?" rasped the beef-faced cop. "That furnace where you dumped the corpse . . . it's so dirty and clogged that you couldn't start a fire if your life depended on it." Such filth . . .

[illegible]

Also available this month are CRYPT and WERD SCIENCE, which feature JULES WERNER RAINIER and TWO-DISTED and month, DON'T FORGET RAINIER FRONTIERS COME! and THREE next month. Get them at your local comic book shop or at ELEGANCE (see our ad in this issue for details).

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, vol. 1 and FRONT #1-4, 10 issues, all return up New Issue #2, \$1.50 each; CRYPT #5-12 & FRONT #5-18, and WILD, #1-14, 28 issues, all return up New Issue #2, \$1.50 each; WILD #15-18, 4 issues, all return up New Issue #2, \$1.50 each. CRYPT #19-24 the entire 11-issue run of PULP SCIENCE-FANTASY (PROBABLE SCIENCE FICTION) Add 50¢ per issue (\$1.50 outside US) for Post.

WE'VE RUN SEARCHES IN ALABAMA, WHERE IN
BIRMINGHAM
CRIMINAL
FOR ALL
WEST BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

THE CONCEPT OF AGENCY

RECEIVED: 1997 JANUARY 15; REVISED: 1997 JUNE 15; ACCEPTED: 1997 SEPTEMBER 15

Category 1A: Low Performance Features

"Tackling Poverty"

1000

100

100

George Gandy

Abstract

Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the solution on the adsorption of the dye. The concentration of the solution was 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.4, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 2.0, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 3.0, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 4.0, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7, 4.8, 4.9, 5.0, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9, 6.0, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.8, 6.9, 7.0, 7.1, 7.2, 7.3, 7.4, 7.5, 7.6, 7.7, 7.8, 7.9, 8.0, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7, 8.8, 8.9, 9.0, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.4, 9.5, 9.6, 9.7, 9.8, 9.9, 10.0, 10.1, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7, 10.8, 10.9, 11.0, 11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.7, 11.8, 11.9, 12.0, 12.1, 12.2, 12.3, 12.4, 12.5, 12.6, 12.7, 12.8, 12.9, 13.0, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 13.4, 13.5, 13.6, 13.7, 13.8, 13.9, 14.0, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.4, 14.5, 14.6, 14.7, 14.8, 14.9, 15.0, 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, 15.4, 15.5, 15.6, 15.7, 15.8, 15.9, 16.0, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.4, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.8, 16.9, 17.0, 17.1, 17.2, 17.3, 17.4, 17.5, 17.6, 17.7, 17.8, 17.9, 18.0, 18.1, 18.2, 18.3, 18.4, 18.5, 18.6, 18.7, 18.8, 18.9, 19.0, 19.1, 19.2, 19.3, 19.4, 19.5, 19.6, 19.7, 19.8, 19.9, 20.0, 20.1, 20.2, 20.3, 20.4, 20.5, 20.6, 20.7, 20.8, 20.9, 21.0, 21.1, 21.2, 21.3, 21.4, 21.5, 21.6, 21.7, 21.8, 21.9, 22.0, 22.1, 22.2, 22.3, 22.4, 22.5, 22.6, 22.7, 22.8, 22.9, 23.0, 23.1, 23.2, 23.3, 23.4, 23.5, 23.6, 23.7, 23.8, 23.9, 24.0, 24.1, 24.2, 24.3, 24.4, 24.5, 24.6, 24.7, 24.8, 24.9, 25.0, 25.1, 25.2, 25.3, 25.4, 25.5, 25.6, 25.7, 25.8, 25.9, 26.0, 26.1, 26.2, 26.3, 26.4, 26.5, 26.6, 26.7, 26.8, 26.9, 27.0, 27.1, 27.2, 27.3, 27.4, 27.5, 27.6, 27.7, 27.8, 27.9, 28.0, 28.1, 28.2, 28.3, 28.4, 28.5, 28.6, 28.7, 28.8, 28.9, 29.0, 29.1, 29.2, 29.3, 29.4, 29.5, 29.6, 29.7, 29.8, 29.9, 30.0, 30.1, 30.2, 30.3, 30.4, 30.5, 30.6, 30.7, 30.8, 30.9, 31.0, 31.1, 31.2, 31.3, 31.4, 31.5, 31.6, 31.7, 31.8, 31.9, 32.0, 32.1, 32.2, 32.3, 32.4, 32.5, 32.6, 32.7, 32.8, 32.9, 33.0, 33.1, 33.2, 33.3, 33.4, 33.5, 33.6, 33.7, 33.8, 33.9, 34.0, 34.1, 34.2, 34.3, 34.4, 34.5, 34.6, 34.7, 34.8, 34.9, 35.0, 35.1, 35.2, 35.3, 35.4, 35.5, 35.6, 35.7, 35.8, 35.9, 36.0, 36.1, 36.2, 36.3, 36.4, 36.5, 36.6, 36.7, 36.8, 36.9, 37.0, 37.1, 37.2, 37.3, 37.4, 37.5, 37.6, 37.7, 37.8, 37.9, 38.0, 38.1, 38.2, 38.3, 38.4, 38.5, 38.6, 38.7, 38.8, 38.9, 39.0, 39.1, 39.2, 39.3, 39.4, 39.5, 39.6, 39.7, 39.8, 39.9, 40.0, 40.1, 40.2, 40.3, 40.4, 40.5, 40.6, 40.7, 40.8, 40.9, 41.0, 41.1, 41.2, 41.3, 41.4, 41.5, 41.6, 41.7, 41.8, 41.9, 42.0, 42.1, 42.2, 42.3, 42.4, 42.5, 42.6, 42.7, 42.8, 42.9, 43.0, 43.1, 43.2, 43.3, 43.4, 43.5, 43.6, 43.7, 43.8, 43.9, 44.0, 44.1, 44.2, 44.3, 44.4, 44.5, 44.6, 44.7, 44.8, 44.9, 45.0, 45.1, 45.2, 45.3, 45.4, 45.5, 45.6, 45.7, 45.8, 45.9, 46.0, 46.1, 46.2, 46.3, 46.4, 46.5, 46.6, 46.7, 46.8, 46.9, 47.0, 47.1, 47.2, 47.3, 47.4, 47.5, 47.6, 47.7, 47.8, 47.9, 48.0, 48.1, 48.2, 48.3, 48.4, 48.5, 48.6, 48.7, 48.8, 48.9, 49.0, 49.1, 49.2, 49.3, 49.4, 49.5, 49.6, 49.7, 49.8, 49.9, 50.0, 50.1, 50.2, 50.3, 50.4, 50.5, 50.6, 50.7, 50.8, 50.9, 51.0, 51.1, 51.2, 51.3, 51.4, 51.5, 51.6, 51.7, 51.8, 51.9, 52.0, 52.1, 52.2, 52.3, 52.4, 52.5, 52.6, 52.7, 52.8, 52.9, 53.0, 53.1, 53.2, 53.3, 53.4, 53.5, 53.6, 53.7, 53.8, 53.9, 54.0, 54.1, 54.2, 54.3, 54.4, 54.5, 54.6, 54.7, 54.8, 54.9, 55.0, 55.1, 55.2, 55.3, 55.4, 55.5, 55.6, 55.7, 55.8, 55.9, 56.0, 56.1, 56.2, 56.3, 56.4, 56.5, 56.6, 56.7, 56.8, 56.9, 57.0, 57.1, 57.2, 57.3, 57.4, 57.5, 57.6, 57.7, 57.8, 57.9, 58.0, 58.1, 58.2, 58.3, 58.4, 58.5, 58.6, 58.7, 58.8, 58.9, 59.0, 59.1, 59.2, 59.3, 59.4, 59.5, 59.6, 59.7, 59.8, 59.9, 60.0, 60.1, 60.2, 60.3, 60.4, 60.5, 60.6, 60.7, 60.8, 60.9, 61.0, 61.1, 61.2, 61.3, 61.4, 61.5, 61.6, 61.7, 61.8, 61.9, 62.0, 62.1, 62.2, 62.3, 62.4, 62.5, 62.6, 62.7, 62.8, 62.9, 63.0, 63.1, 63.2, 63.3, 63.4, 63.5, 63.6, 63.7, 63.8, 63.9, 64.0, 64.1, 64.2, 64.3, 64.4, 64.5, 64.6, 64.7, 64.8, 64.9, 65.0, 65.1, 65.2, 65.3, 65.4, 65.5, 65.6, 65.7, 65.8, 65.9, 66.0, 66.1, 66.2, 66.3, 66.4, 66.5, 66.6, 66.7, 66.8, 66.9, 67.0, 67.1, 67.2, 67.3, 67.4, 67.5, 67.6, 67.7, 67.8, 67.9, 68.0, 68.1, 68.2, 68.3, 68.4, 68.5, 68.6, 68.7, 68.8, 68.9, 69.0, 69.1, 69.2, 69.3, 69

Abstract

For serious buyers of homes, the owner provides an independent public opinion letter. This will be done, unless and until the owner's opinion letter is not signed and the owner cannot give a good reason for not doing so. The letter will be signed by the owner or by a person who is not a member of the owner's family.



BLOWHARD



The tall man in the frazzled coat shambled almost absent-mindedly into the bank . . . glanced around uncertainly . . . then stepped up to the wooden railing surrounding the manager's cubicle.

"Can I help . . . ?" the chubby gentleman seated at the spacious desk started to inquire, a rigid professional smile creasing his waxy features.

"You're the manager, huh?" the tall man mumbled, as if reassuring himself. He snuffled, glanced around the bank again, then fumbled a paper bag from the torn pocket of his sagging coat.

"This is a robbery," he announced, in a flat, tired voice. "I got a bomb in this sack, mister . . . unless you hand over all the dough you got in the cashier's booth, I'm gonna drop this bag on the floor and kill all of us!"

The manager's eyes bulged like white onions on toothpicks as he stared in complete bewilderment at the tall man and, then, at the crumpled bag his visitor held. Before he could splutter a protest, the tall man was mumbling again, "I need the money bad," he muttered. "If I can't get my hands on some manna I might just as well be dead. That's why I'm ready to kill myself and all of us . . ."

The anxiety on the manager's fat face vanished. His eyes crinkled as he leaned back in his chair. He snorted through his nose, slapped his thigh and began to roar with delight. The squat bank guard waddled over . . . the quickly old cashier looked over from her cage . . . the line of four depositors turned and stared.

"That old gag," the manager gasped, between spasms of laughter, "it's been used so often that it's old even for television! The bomb in the paper bag . . . HAAAAAA!"

The bank depositors closed in and the buzz of conversation was audible above the manager's gasping for breath. "The bomb-in-the-paper-bag gimmick!" belabored a thick-set man. "It's been used in dime novels . . . the movies . . . ! "The desperate thief ready to blow himself up!" tittered a bird-like lady in clams, walking shoes.

"Awright, mac," the squat bank guard started to wheeze, as he laboriously slid a service revolver from a holster hanging around his stomach. "I'll take that dangerous paper bag, mister blowhard . . ."

The tall man's bloodshot eyes circled the group of snoring faces, darted to the revolver glinting in the guard's hand . . . then he dropped the sack to the floor and sprinted to the door with incredible speed. Before anyone could move, he was gone.

The uncontrolled laughter was a chorus of chuckles, snorts, guffaws, chorles and whinnies. The thick-set man had to be thumped on the back to keep him from choking. When quiet again had been restored, they all turned and looked disdainfully at the paper bag on the floor. The guard stepped forward to pick it up, so that he could haul it into the trash basket . . .

The violent explosion shattered the windows for two blocks around, so sudden was the blast that the occupants of the bank were dead before a single cry of pain or surprise had been uttered. An estimated fifty people in the neighborhood were knocked to the pavement by the detonation of the bomb in the paper bag.

A tall man in a frazzled coat picked himself up from the sidewalk, patted a coat pocket to make certain that the second of his two crumpled paper bags was unharmed . . . then shambled off in the direction of a bank over on the next avenue.

IN THE BAG

THE NAME'S WILCOX... BADGE 50074. I'M A PLAIN-CLOTHES COP. THEY GOT ME PATROLLING THE TIGHTEST SECTION IN TOWN. IT'S A QUIET NIGHT THOUGH, AND I'M NOT COMPLAINTING...CEPT THAT THIS JOY BRIZZLE'S CHILLING ME TO THE BONE...



HE KINDA STUMBLED ALONG AS HE COMES TO THE BUILDING. HE'S WEARING ONE OF THOSE LEATHER JACKETS AND HE'S CARRYING SOMETHING... A BAG... A CANVAS BAG WITH MAYBE A BIG ROUND WELD IN IT...



THE SERGEANT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE MADE MY HEAT THE WINDMILL, THAT DEAD IT IN TONIGHT. THE ONLY SOUND IS THE SWISHY-HEB OF TIRES NOW AND THEN AS A LONE CAR MOVED DOWN THE BLACK, SHINY STREET...



IT'S SURE LOSELY, AND I GET TO THINKING ABOUT STACEY'S JOINT AND HOW COOZY HIS BAR ALWAYS IS AND HOW GOOD A SHOT WOULD FEEL WARMING MY INSIDES. I TURN THE CORNER AND HEAD FOR IT WHEN I SPOT THE LITTLE GUY EDGING DOWN THE WET SIDEWALK...



I TAKE A BOUNTY AT HIM AS WE PASS EACH OTHER UNDER A LAMP-POST. HE'S GOT BURN-IN CHEEKS AND A WIDE-EYED LOOK... LIKE HE'S SCARED OF SOMETHIN'...



AND THEN I NOTICE THE BAG AGAIN... AND I SEE IT'S GOT A BIG RED RUST-COLORED STAIN ON THE BOTTOM. IT LOOKS LIKE... LIKE... LIKE DRIED BLOOD, MAYBE...



HEY! BAG! JUST A MINUTE!

THE LITTLE GUY DON'T STOP. HE KEEPS ON GOING. I BUZZ HIM AGAIN. I KNOW HE HEARS ME... UNLESS HE'S STONE DEAD...



HE GIVES ME ONE WILD LOOK, TURNS SHOOT-WHITE AND TAKES OFF. I TROT ALONG AFTER HIM, THINKIN' MAYBE THE POON SACKER IS JUST SCARED 'CAUSE HE WORKS FOR A BUTCHER AND SNIPES A POLLED ROAST OR SOMETHING BLOODY LIKE THAT...



IN MY TIME ON THE FORCE, I'VE RUN INTO ALL KINDS OF CRAZY BUNGE...PERVERTS...BANNERS...HOMOPHOBAL FRIENDS. I BEGIN PICTURING THIS GUY LURKING IN SOME DARK ALLEY WITH AN EMPTY SACK AND A BIG KNIFE...WAITING...



I THINK MY BADGE. I'M WALKING AFTER HIM NOW AND HE'S STARTING TO WALK EVEN FASTER...



HE REACHES A CORNER AND DOUBLES AROUND. BY THE TIME I GET THERE, HE AIN'T IN SIGHT. THERE'S A CAR PARKED AT THE CURB AND I FIGURE HE'S HIDING IT...



AND I REMEMBER AN OLD REEFER NAMED FISH WHO CARVED UP OLD LADIES. I SEE THIS CREEP JUMPING SOME POON OLD GAL AND CRASSING HER INTO THE ALLEY...



...AND HACKING HER UP AND STUFFING HER HEAD IN THAT SACKEL... THAT BLOODY-BOTTOMED SACKEL...

I SPURT WONDERIN' IF MAYBE I'VE BEEN A COP TOO LONG. IF MAYBE I GOT TOO MUCH IMAGINATION... IF MAYBE THE MUST-COLORED STAIN AIN'T BLOOD AFTER ALL YEAH? THEN WHAT'S THE CREEP *POONIN'* FOR?



THE GUY DON'T LET OUT A HEEP. I START AROUND THE CAR AND OFF HE GOES, LAMMING OUT LIKE HE'S CARRYING A HOT POTATO... AND I BEGIN THINKING THAT MAYBE THAT BLOODY-BOTTOMED SACKEL IS SOMETHING HOT.



THINKING THESE THINGS MAKES
WE HATE THE SLOWLYING LITTLE
BAT. I GOTTA CATCH HIM NOW...
CATCH HIM AND FIND OUT FOR
SURE, HE TURNS INTO AN ALLEY,
AND I'M RIGHT BEHIND HIM, GIV-
ING IT ALL I'VE GOT.



HE STARTS CRYING. I FIGURE HE
CAN'T FILL A SHIV ON ME WHILE
HE'S MUDDING THE BAG. SO I HOL-
STER MY GUN AND MOVE IN, KEEP-
ING MY LIGHT ON HIM...

I CAN'T TAKE NO FOR AN
ANSWER, BUDDY! I'M THE
STUBBORN TYPE. NOW,
HAND IT OVER!



HE WAS A JOHNNY-COME-
LATELY! I WORKED A LONG
TIME FOR THE COMPANY BEFORE
HE CAME. BUT HE WAS YOUNG,
AMBITIOUS... HE HAD A GOOD
HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS. HE
BECAME HEAD BOOKKEEPER...
MY BOSS?



THE POOR IDIOT'S MADE A BIG MIS-
TAKE. THE ALLEY'S BLIND. I GOT
HIM TRAPPED. I PULL OUT MY .45
AND MY POCKET FLASH AND START
PENCILING THE SCUM AROUND...

GET THIS STRAIGHT, MISTER!
YOU RUN THIS TIME, AND YOU
GET A SLAP IN YOUR BACK...



THIS LITTLE CHARACTER IS
STRONGER THAN HE LOOKS. I
TRY WRECKING THE BAG AWAY
BUT HE'S GOT IT IN A DEATH GRIP...

Y'GON...
YOU GUMB...
@#%*^&!



EVERY DAY HE NEEDLED ME!
MARRING... MARRING. I'D GET
SICK INSIDE. AND GUESS, SOME-
TIMES, AND I WOULDN'T KNOW
WHAT I WAS DOING, BUT, HE
WOULDN'T LET UP! HE WAS
SHREWD... CLEVER... SMART!



THE LIGHT PICKS HIM UP CRIMING
IN A CELLAR DOORWAY... WHITE AND
SHIVERING... GASHING FOR AIR, HE
WRAPS HIS ARMS AROUND THE SAF-
EVAL AND HURTS IT TO HIM LIKE A
LITTLE GIRL WITH A DOLL...

GRAY, WAC! NOT NO!
LET'S HAVE
A LOOK!
T'S MORE!



I CAN SEE HE'S SCARED TILLY NO
I LET GO. HE STARTS TALKING
AND I STUDY HIS EYES, TRYIN' TO
SEE IF MAYBE HE'S A HOMER...

I HATED HIM! HE WAS ALWAYS
PICKING ON ME. "MR. DOMINER,
YOU'RE TWO MINUTES LATE!"
"MR. DOMINER, THOSE FIGURES
AREN'T VERY HEAVY!" MR. DOMINER,
YOUR FIE... YOUR HAIR... YOUR
APPEARANCE!"



SO I BOUGHT AN AFE... HEH, HEH,
AND TONIGHT I WAITED FOR HIM!
HE... HE'S NOT SHAKING ANY-
MORE! HE HADN'T GOT A GOOD
HEAD ON HIS SHOULDERS
ANYMORE!



THE LITTLE GUY'S EYES ARE GLAZING AND HIS LIPS ARE TWISTED UP IN A VICIOUS GRIN. AND SAILOR IS RUNNING DOWN HIS CHIN. MY STOMACH GRAWLS AS I LOOK DOWN AT THE ROUND-DRAPED SATCHEL...



CHORE... YOU MEAN... IN THAT BAG... HIS... HIS HEAD?

I HAD TO TAKE IT AWAY FROM HIM? YOU CAN SEE THAT, CAN'T YOU? I HAD TO GET OFF HIS ROTTEN SMELLING SOMEBODY HEAD?



YOU... YOU'RE CRAZY AS A LOON!



I FEEL RICKY JUST LOOKING AT THE BAG, 'CAUSE NOW I KNOW WHAT'S IN IT... A HEAD... A COLD, STAINING, SMELTLY-SPOON HEAD. AND THEN, SUDDENLY, THE SHOT IS KICKING AND SCREAMING AND THE FLASHLIGHT IS FLYING FROM MY HAND AND SMASHING ON THE WET CEMENT...



HE COMES UP WITH HIS KICKER IN MY BUT AND WHILE I'M SINKING DOWN IN AGONY, HE TAKES OFF AGAIN...



BY THE TIME I GET MY GUN OUT AND START SHOOTING, I'M SENDING LEAD AT NOTHING. HE'S GONE.



I FIGHT OFF THE NAUSEA AND THE PAIN AND IT'S THE LONGEST DAMN ALLEY I EVER LIMP DOWN... BUT NOW I'M ON THE STREET AND I SPOT THE DOLLY TWIN... THE FROWL CAR...



HEY! SULLIVAN! BEMER! IT'S ME... MILEED...

THE FROWL CAR EASES UP. I SLIDE IN. DID YOU SEE A LITTLE FORT... FIVE-FOOT-FOUR... MAYBE... CARRYING A GARGAS BAG? FEAR! HE PASSED US A MINUTE AGO... HEADING SOUTH?



SO SOUTH, SULLIVAN, FIGHT THAT SCREW-BALL IS A HOMOCIDAL MURDER. HE JUST HACKED THE AGAS OFF SOMEBODY AND IT'S IN THAT BAG? RIGHT...



SULLIVAN BURS THE FROWL CAR... U-TURNING IT AND TAKING OFF SOUTH AT SIXTY. ONLY THERE AIN'T NO SIGN OF THE CRAZY KILLER...



EMPTY... JUST EMPTY STREETS.

THE BOMB IS AN ALARM!

I STICK WITH THE FRONT CAR FOR
MAYBE TEN MINUTES AS IT CRUISES
THE SIDE STREETS. THEN I GET
ANNOYED...

LET'S OUT AT THE
NEXT CORNER,
BULLFARK. I'M
GOING TO TRY IT
ON FOOT!

OKAY,
MOLLOS

I CLIMB OUT AND WATCH THEM
PULL AWAY INTO THE MIST...

I PULL MY COLLAR AROUND MY
NECK AND START DOWN THE SHIM-
MERING SIDEWALK...

AND THEN I HEAR IT...THE CLICK-
CLACK OF FEET ECHOING OUT OF
THE CRIZZLE. QUICK-MOVING FEET.
BOUNCE-TURNING-BO.

I DUCK BACK INTO A DOORWAY AND
WAIT. HE COMES THROUGH THE MIST
LIKE A SHADOW...A SHADOW CARRY-
ING A BELLON-SHIPPED JEWELRY BOX.

I PULL OUT MY .45. HE COMES
CLOSER...SWINGING THE BAG LIKE
HE WAS HAPPY...HUMMING SOFTLY...

I STOP YOU...
YOU CRAFTSMAN!

I STOP YOU...

I STEP OUT OF THE DOORWAY AS
HE PASSES ME...

HE SPINS AROUND/I'M NOT TAKIN'
ANY CHANCES. I SQUEEZE THE
TRIGGER, BLASTING HIS FACE AWAY
IN A RED SMOG...

HE PITCHES FORWARD. THE DAWNS
DAG DROPS WITH A THUD...

HEY! DOMINICK?



I STAND OVER HIS TWITCHING BODY UNTIL IT DON'T TWITCH ANYMORE.



THEN I LOOK AT THE CANVAS SATCHEL LYING IN THE PUDDLE...



THE FRONT CAR SCREAMS UP...

WE HEARD SHOTS? OH, IT'S FODD, WLEDD? WHAT HAPPENED?



I GOT HIM? I GOT THE MARRID, SULLIVAN? I HAD TO SHOOT HIM? HE TRIED TO...

I CAN SEE SULLIVAN'S FACE TURN WHITE, AND I CAN HEAR BERGER WHISPERING...



IT... IT CAN'T BE HIM?

OF COURSE, IT'S HIM? LOOK! THERE'S THE CAR! HE'S GOT A HEAD IN THAT BAG? I KNOW IT!



NOT HIM, WLEDD! NOT THIS GUY! CAR'S JUST HADDED IN THAT THEY GOT YOUR MARRID A FEW MINUTES AGO...



I LOOK DOWN AT THE STILL FIGURE LYING FACE-DOWN ON THE BLOODY, WET SIDEWALK. I LOOK AT THE CANVAS BAG...



IT'S AWF TO MEY IT'S AWF TOO IT'S ROUND? IT'S GOT A HEAD? IT...

I UNZIP THE SATCHEL. THE ROUND BLACK SPHERE MOANS OUT ONTO THE GUTTER...



A HOWLING BALL? OH, LORD... IT'S ONLY A HOWLING BALL?



YOU... YOU BETTER GIVE ME YOUR IDA/MOLEDD.

RUN DOWN

IT IS ONE OF THOSE DAMP RAIN NIGHTS WHEN THE SKY IS A BROWNISH-BLACK ARCADE OVER THE SLOWING CITY AND THE GREY MIST CLINGS TO YOUR CHEEKS LIKE A WET CLAMMY COMBER. THE BARISH RED NEON SIGN OF THE JOEY'S CASINO CASTS ITS RUBY OVERTONES ON THE GLISTERING SIDEWALK, THE CREAM-COLORED CADILLAC, AND THE FLASHY-DRESSED GENT YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR. AS HE EMERGES FROM THE CASINO AND WALKS TOWARD YOU, WHERE YOU HIDE IN THE ALLEY OPPOSITE HIS CAR, YOU FUMBLE IN YOUR POCKET FOR THE OLD PEARL HANDLE OF YOUR SWITCHKNIFE. YOUR NAME IS JOE HARRIS. YOU'RE NOT WORTH A DIME, BUT IN A FEW MINUTES YOU'RE GOING TO BE RICH! *NOW!* YOU SLIP THE KNIFE FROM YOUR POCKET, PRESS THE BUTTON, AND AS THE RAZOR-SHARP BLADE SNAPS OUT, YOU THINK, JOE HARRIS... YOU THINK OF LOVE, AND HATE, AND FRUSTRATION, AND *DOWN.*...



YOU THINK OF YOUR BEAUTIFUL WIFE MARINA, AND THAT NIGHT YOU FOUND OUT FOR CERTAIN. YOU REMEMBER HOW SHE CAME HOME WITH HER HAIR WILD AND HER LIPSTICK SMUGGED AND HER CLOTHES WRINKLED AND RUMPLED. . .



IT'S *THREE A.M.*,
MARINA...

NO NOBODY! WELL NOBODY
TOLD YOU TO WAIT UP! TURN
OVER AND GO TO SLEEP!

YOU REMEMBER THE SMILE OF HER LOVELY MOUTH AS SHE CONFIRMED WHAT YOU'D SUSPECTED FOR WEEKS...



YOU'VE...
YOU'VE BEEN
OUT WITH
ANOTHER
MAN!

NOT JUST ANOTHER MAN, JOE!
THERE'S *NO OTHER* MAN LIKE *HIM!*
HALLY! HE'S GOT *EVERYTHING*,
EXCEPT *MONEY!* BUT WHEN I'M
WITH HIM, I CAN FORGET THAT
HE'S JUST A POOR BLUR LINE
YOU!

YOU SPRANG FROM THE BED AND TRIED TO HOLD HER, BUT YOU DROPPED YOUR ARMS WHEN YOU FELT HER SHUDDER... SAW THE REVELATION IN HER FACE...

WHY, MARSHA, WHY?

I WAS TORN OF WORKING, JOE! YOU WERE MY OUTLET SO I MARRIED YOU! I THOUGHT YOU HAD SOMETHING THAT MIGHT HAVE MADE UP FOR YOU! BUT YOU HAD NOTHING! YOU'VE GOT NOTHING, JOE! NOTHING!



YOU TURNED AWAY, YOUR HEART POUNDING... YOUR TEMPLES THROBBING...

I'VE GOT TO GET HER BACK! MONEY! THAT'S THE ONLY THING THAT CAN DO IT! I'VE GOT TO GET MONEY, FAST!



YOU RECALL NOW CONFUSED YOU WERE... ONLY SURE THAT YOU COULD NEVER STOP LOVING MARSHA... NEVER GIVE HER UP, YOU REMEMBER NOW, THE LAST NIGHT, YOU WATCHED FROM THE WINDOW OF YOUR DARKENED ROOM...



...WATCHED YOUR HANDSOME BELLY BRING MARSHA HOME. YOU SAW THEM STAND CLOSE, SEARCH FOR EACH OTHER'S LIPS, THEN TREMBLE IN WHAT SEEMED LIKE A NEVER-ENDING EMBRACE...



YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT ALL NIGHT AND THIS MORNING, JOE... AND LIKE A SNOWING MAN CLUTCHING AT STRAW, YOU GRABBED DESPERATELY AT A LONGSHOT...

YOU SAY YOU WANT TO CLOSE YOUR ACCOUNT, MR. HARPER?

YEAH... THE WHOLE FORTY-THREE DUCKS!



YES, JOE, YOU DECIDED TO SHOOT THE MOON. YOU DREW OUT ALL OF YOUR SAVINGS THIS AFTERNOON ON YOUR LUNCH HOUR, AND A LITTLE WHILE AGO, YOU BOUGHT FORTY-THREE DOLLARS WORTH OF CHIPS AT THE CASINO BARRED, PUT THE WHOLE STACK ON "RED" AND MURMURED A LITTLE PRAYER...

O'MON, BABY... FOR ME AND MARSHA...

ALL BETS DOWN!



WITH AN EXPERT FLICK OF THE WRIST, THE CROUPIER SPUN THE WHEEL, TOSSED IN THE LITTLE BALL...AND IN TWENTY SECONDS, IT WAS ALL OVER...



YOU PASSED HIM AS HE STOOD AT THE CASINO'S WINDOW AND YOU SAW THE SIZE OF THE WAD OF BILLS HE WAS ALREADY CARRYING. THEN, TO IT, HE ADDED THE SIXTY DDO GRAND HE'D WON. HIS GRIN SMILE SALLED YOU AS HE REFUSED A BODYGUARD.

IT'S ALWAYS LIKE THAT! THE GUYS THAT DON'T NEED IT GET MORE AND MORE...



HE SHOVED THE KNIFE AWAY AND WHIRLS LIKE A WILDCAT. FOR A SPLIT SECOND, YOU FARED...REACT OUT OF REFLEXES. THEN YOU SAW THE KNIFE THROUST INTO HIS CHEST. HE SAGGED, SWAYS A LITTLE, THEN SAGS...



YOU STOOD THERE, STARTING BLANKLY, AS YOUR DRIPS...YOUR FORTY-THREE DOLLARS...WERE RAKED IN AND PUSHED TOWARD ANOTHER MAN...A FLASHY-DRESSED MAN. HE WAS ON TWENTY-ONE...BLACK. THE CROUPIER RAKED STACKS AND STAKES OF CHIPS TOWARD HIM...

YOUR LIFE IS GOOD TONIGHT, MR. FARRELL!



YOU WATCHED IN JERALOUS PASSION AS, TIME AFTER TIME, THIS FARRELL, OUT WON...UNTIL...

I AM SORRY, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, BUT MR. FARRELL HAS BROKEN THE BANK FOR TONIGHT! THE WHEEL IS CLOSED!



SO YOU PRECESSED HIM INTO THE DARK STREET, SEARCHED FOR THE CADDY, AND HIS IN THE ALLEY...WAITING. NOW, YOU GRIP THE KNIFE IN YOUR SWEATY HAND AS HE STEPS TO HIS CAR. YOU SLIP UP BEHIND HIM, BRING THE SCALPEL-HORNED BLADE TO HIS THROAT...



...AS THE DOOR TO THE CASINO OPENS AND YOU HEAR TIPSY LAUGHTER. SOMEONE IS COMING...A COUPLE...YOU WERE YOUR VISION BEFORE HE CAME...YOU DO SOME FAST AS LIDING...



YOU BLAME AT THE STAGGERING COUPLE EMBLEM FROM THE CASINO, THEN DASH THE LIFELESS BODY OF YOUR VICTIM TO HIS CAR AND DUMP HIM IN THE BACK. THE WOMAN LAUGHS GIDDILY AND POINTS YOUR WAY. . .



LOOKA, HONEY. . . A *DRUNK!* IF THERE'SH ONE THING I CAN'T STYAN, IM A *DRUNK!*

YOU START DRIVING AIMLESSLY, AND NOW, YOU HAVE TIME TO THINK. *YOU'RE A MURDERER!* YOUR HEART SLAMS AGAINST YOUR CHEST, YOUR FOOT CHATTERS ON THE GAS PEDAL, AND A COLD RIVULET OF SWEAT TRICKLES DOWN YOUR SPINE..



I DIDN'T *MEAN* TO KILL HIM! I *ONLY* WANTED TO *POB HIS ROLL!* HE *MADE ME!* IT WAS LIKE... LIKE *SELF DEFENSE*...

YOU'RE AN AMATEUR AT THIS MURDER BUSINESS, JOE. YOU GET SCARED, YOU SLAM BACK INTO THE CAR AND TRISK *AWAY* BRASHING YOUR *HEART*. . . YOU *SEEE* LOOK AT YOU, WHEN YOU REACH THE CITY'S OUTSKIRTS, YOU SPOT A DARK ALLEY ON A DESERTED STREET. YOU STOP THE CAR AND SET OUT..



IT'S GOT TO DO! LET 'EM FIND HIM! THEY STILL CAN'T TIE ME UP.

THE COUPLE NEEDS AWAY AND YOU'RE ALONE WITH THE DEAD MAN...THE VERY RICH DEAD MAN. YOU GO THROUGH HIS POCKETS AND FIND THE ROLL...NEARLY ONE HUNDRED GRAND!JOE.



I'VE GOT TO GET *AWAY* OF THIS SHY.. *DUMP HIM* SOMEWHERE...

YOU *KNOW* NO JURY WILL SWALLOW *THAT* ONE, JOE! YOU KEEP DRIVING. YOU DRIVE OUT TO THE COUNTRY. . . TO A LONELY ROAD, YOU STOP AND SET OUT. . .



I'LL *BURY* HIM IN THE *WOODS* HERE AND NO ONE WILL *EVER*... CHORE...

YOU'RE SUDDENLY BATHED IN LIGHT, THE HEADLIGHTS OF ANOTHER CAR HAVE FLASHED ON. TWO LOVERS, THEIR *FRAMING* STRUCK UPON, PREPARE TO DEPART FOR A MORE ORIENTED RENDEZVOUS SPOT.



YOU DASH THE CORPSE WITH THE FLASHY, BLOOD-SOAKED CLOTHES TO THE ALLEY'S DARK MOUTH. *REMEMBER!* THE *CLASH* IS *CHERRY* WITH *SHRITS*. IN LIGHT AND YOUR DISCREET HIDING PLACE SPRINGS ALIVE WITH CHATTERING PEOPLE AND MARTAL MUSIC.



WHAT THE DEVIL..?

THEY POUR FROM THE DOORWAYS INTO THE ALLEY, JOE! PEOPLE... HUNDREDS OF THEM. IT'S A **MOVIE THEATER!** THE **LITE SHOW** IS OVER! WITH A STRENGTH BORN OF FRUSTRATION YOU PUSH YOUR BODY BACK INTO THE CADILLAC...



YOU FIND A DARK DESERTED GUNNY STREET. YOU HALL UP TO THE CURB OPPOSITE A SEWER. YOU GET OUT, LIFT OPEN THE SEWER-COVER, AND GRAB THE BLOODY FORM FROM THE CAR...



NOW, WITH THE HEAVY IRON LID BACK IN PLACE, YOU BREATHE EASILY FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AN HOUR. YOU GLANCE DOWN THE STREET... AND **YOUR HEART STOPS!** POLICE MEN. A PAIR OF THEM... **GOMING YOUR WAY!**



YOU ZOOM AWAY, CURSING, HOPEING AGAIN THAT YOU WON'T BEEN...



THEN YOU PUSH THE STRIPPING CORPSE DOWN INTO THE STINKING BLACK HOLE...



WITH GOADING KNEES, YOU BEGIN TO WALK, GLANCING BACK FURTIVELY AT THE OFFICERS APPROACHING THE SEWER. YOU SEE ONE OF THEM STOP AND POINT...



YOU SEE THEM STEP TO THE SEWER. SEE ONE OF THEM BEND DOWN, THEN LOOK UP AT YOU... **RIGHT AT YOU, JOE!** HE CALLS OUT...



**RUN, JOE! THAT'S IT! RUN!
THEY KNOW! THEY'RE AFTER
YOU...**



**I CAN'T LET 'EM GET ME NOW...
NOT WHEN I GOT EVERYTHING I
WANT... ALL THE DODDER I'LL
EVER NEED... AND MARIONA...**

**YOU DODGE AND DODDER LIKE A
RABBIT, JOE, BUT THE COPS STICK
WITH YOU LIKE GLUE... SHOUTING
AT YOU...**



**YOU'RE ALMOST HOME, JOE! RUN,
JOE! CROSS THE STREET! SOON YOU'LL
LOOK OUT, JOE! THAT CAR!**



**IT HITS YOU... CRASHES YOUR LEG IN ITS BUMPER... TWISTING...
SPLINTERING SOME... KNOCKING YOU DOWN... THE FRONT
WHEEL PASSES OVER YOUR BELLY... CRUSHING YOUR GUTS...**



**YOU'VE GOT ONE HUNDRED BRANDS AND YOU LIE IN THE
GUTTER, JOE... A GROSSQUE TWISTED MESS, BATTERED
BY AN OLD HEAP OF A CAR. *WAGNY!* LOOK AT THE
DRIVER'S FACE! KEE, JOE! IT'S WALLY. MARIONA'S
LOVER! HE'S SMILING DOWN AT YOU AS AN EFFICIENT
COP'S HANDS PLY THROUGH YOUR IDENTITY...**



**HEY, LOOK AT THIS
MAD OF LETTUCE!**

**IT...IT'S... OH, MY GOD...
IT'S MY HUSBAND!**

**IF YOU COULD ONLY BLACK OUT! BUT YOU CAN'T.
YOU CAN'T ESCAPE THE HELLISH SCENE, YOU SEE
THE CAR BACK OFF... SEE THE DRIVER GET OUT...
THE COPS POUND UP...**



**DON'T WORRY,
MISTER! WE SAW
IT *HAPPEN!* IT
WASN'T YOUR
FAULT!**

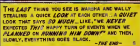
**I CAN'T FIGURE WHY THE
SCREENBALL RAN LIKE THAT.
WE WERE JUST TRYING TO
RETURN THIS EMPTY
WALLET HE DROPPED BY THAT
SEWER...**

**HERE'S YOUR WIFE, JOE. *MARIONA*... SHE'S STANDING
OVER YOU, TOO, TALKING TO THE COPS...**



**YOUR HUSBAND, EN, LADY? WELL...
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS IDENTIFY
YOURSELF AND YOU CAN PICK UP
THIS RANROLL AT HEADQUARTERS
TOMORROW!**

**OF COURSE,
OFFICER!**



**THE LAST THING YOU SEE IS MARIONA AND WALLY
STEALING A QUICK LOOK AT EACH OTHER... A QUIET
LOOK THAT SAYS *SO MUCH*... LIKE, "WE NEVER
EXPECTED THIS HAPPY TURN OF EVENTS WHEN WE
PLANNED ON *RUNNING HIM DOWN!*" AND THEN,
SLOWLY, EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.**

- THE END -